

Macron Announces New Initiative to Help Artsakh

YEREVAN, AUGUST 28, ARMENPRESS. French President Emmanuel Macron announced on Monday a new diplomatic initiative to increase international pressure on Azerbaijan to end its blockade of Nagorno-Karabakh.



Speaking to French ambassadors at a conference, Macron said he will “have an opportunity to speak this week with Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan and Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev.”

“We will demand full respect for the humanitarian Lachin Corridor’s functions. We will once again present a diplomatic initiative in this direction on the international level in order to increase pressure,” Macron added.

On August 25, the French *Le Figaro* newspaper reported that France plans to introduce a UN Security Council resolution regarding the humanitarian crisis in Nagorno-Karabakh resulting from the Azerbaijani blockade of the Lachin Corridor.



Benefactor Nazar Nazarian Dies

NEW YORK — Benefactor and supporter of many cultural organizations in the Armenian community, including the Armenian Democratic Liberal Party and this publication, passed away on August 28 at age 98. A full notice and appreciation will appear in next week’s issue.

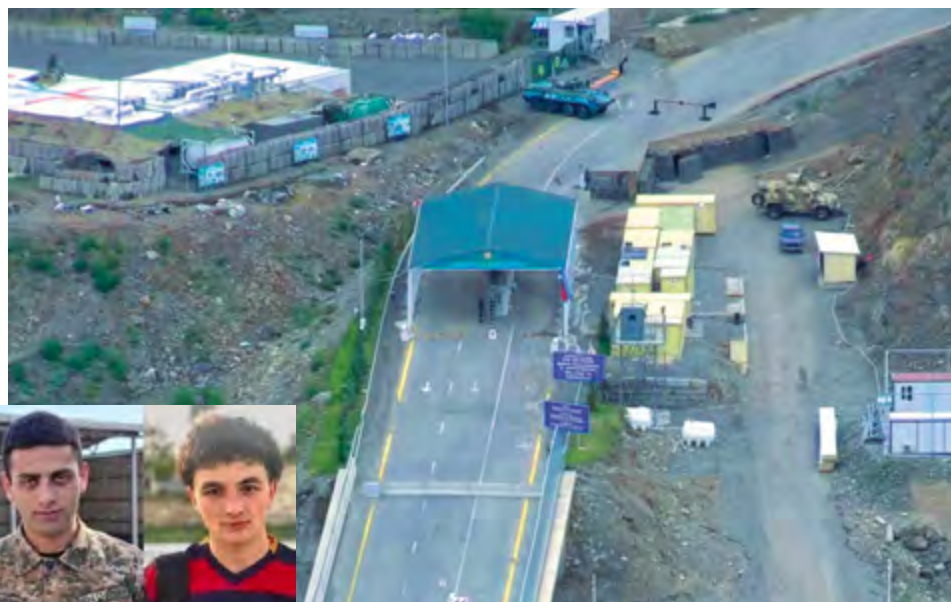
Azerbaijan Nabs 3 More Artsakh Armenians on Bogus Charges

STEPANAKERT (RFE/RL, Public Radio of Armenia) — On August 28 President of the Artsakh Republic Arayik Harutyunyan called an emergency meeting of the Security Council upon the arrest of three citizens. The three young men, Alen Sargsyan, Vahe Hovsepyan and Levon Grigoryan, were detained by Azerbaijani security forces on while traveling to Armenia through the Lachin corridor.

Artak Beglaryan, an advisor to the Artsakh government and a former premier, told RFE/RL’s Armenian Service that the Russian peacekeepers are negotiating with the Azerbaijani side to try to have them freed. Arayik Harutyunyan, the Karabakh president, held an emergency session of his security council later in the day.

“Azerbaijan is continuing its genocidal policy towards the people of Artsakh, once again violating international humanitarian law,” read a Karabakh statement issued shortly after the detentions.

The Azerbaijani authorities did not immediately comment on the arrests. But media outlets linked to them reported that the three Karabakh Armenians are suspected of being members of a Karabakh football team that had “disrespected” the Azerbaijani national flag in a 2021 video posted on social media.



A view of the Azerbaijani checkpoint set up in the Lachin corridor, June 23, 2023.



Alen Sargsyan, Vahe Hovsepyan and Levon Grigoryan

that Sargsyan, Hovsepyan and Grigoryan played for that youth team based in the Karabakh town of Martuni. “All three of them are students of Armenian universities,” he said.

In any case, added Beglaryan, the Azerbaijani allegations are “absurd” and aimed at intimidating Karabakh’s Armenian population opposed to the restoration of Azerbaijani control over their region.

Another Karabakh man, Vagif Khachatryan, was arrested at the Azerbaijani checkpoint in late July while being evacuated by

the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) to Armenia. The 68-year-old was taken to Baku to stand trial on charges of killing and deporting Karabakh’s ethnic Azerbaijani residents in December 1991, at the beginning of the first Armenian-Azerbaijani war.

Karabakh’s leadership rejected the “false” accusations and demanded Khachatryan’s immediate release. The Armenian Foreign Ministry likewise condemned Khachatryan’s arrest as a “blatant violation of international humanitarian law” and “war crime.”

see ARRESTS, page 5

‘Worst Assistant in the World’ Sona Movsesian Set to Be Best MC

By Alin K. Gregorian *Mirror-Spectator Staff* LOS ANGELES — Sona Movsesian has come a long way

from being known jokingly as the “world’s worst assistant” to talk show and podcast legend Conan O’Brien to a podcast host and author.

Movsesian is O’Brien’s sidekick on the podcast “Conan O’Brien Needs a Friend,” along with the show’s producer Matt Gourley. O’Brien’s podcast is one of the most downloaded on iTunes; It is routinely in the top 20 and has been downloaded least 250 million times. The guests disappoint — from Martin Short Steve Martin to Bruce Springsteen Michelle and Barack Obama.

see MOVSESIAN, page 16



Sona Movsesian and Conan O'Brien in Armenia

KARABAKH

Bread Shortage Worsens in Karabakh



WATERTOWN

SSAES Holds Graduation Ceremony



NEW YORK

Deacons Train For Lifetime Of Devotion to Church





ARMENIA

NEWS from ARMENIA

Ex-PM Urges Supporters To Join Rally in Defense of Artsakh

YEREVAN (Panorama.am) — Former Prime Minister Vazgen Manukyan on August 28 warned of threats facing the Armenian people and statehood, calling for unity to defend the key principles underlying the 1988 national movement.

He urged his supporters and political allies to join the rally in support of Artsakh to be held in Yerevan on September 2.

In a statement addressed to the current and former members of the National Democratic Union, Manukyan recalled that the three basic principles of building an independent and sovereign Armenia state with a strong security system, uniting all Armenians and protecting Artsakh's right to self-determination were at the core of the 1988 movement.

"We strongly believed that the three ideas were interconnected and could not be implemented without each other," Manukyan noted.

"What is happening now in Armenia proves this simple truth. These principles are being destroyed in Armenia by the efforts of the authorities. Currently, it's not only about the Artsakh issue. The Armenian statehood and the entire Armenian nation are at risk.

Yeraskh Plant Under Azeri Heavy Shooting again

YEREVAN (Panorama.am) — GTB Steel, a U.S.-affiliated company building a smelting plant in an Armenian border village of Yeraskh, reported heavy shooting by Azerbaijani troops over the past three days.

On August 28, the company said that the Azeri forces also targeted the accommodation for workers.

"From August 25 to 27, the Azerbaijani armed forces intensely fired an unprecedented number of shots at the under-construction plant in Yeraskh, also targeting the workers' accommodation. More than 60 shots were fired," GTB Steel said.

OSCE Envoy Visits Lachin

YEREVAN (PanARMENIAN.Net) — Ambassador Andrzej Kasprzyk, the Personal Representative of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Chairman-in-Office, visited the entrance of the Lachin Corridor in the village of Kornidzor in Armenia's Syunik Province on August 24 to see first-hand the situation around the corridor and brief the OSCE Chairman-in-Office.

An Armenian humanitarian aid convoy, as well as emergency supplies sent by French regions for Karabakh have been stranded at the entrance of the Lachin Corridor for nearly a month because Azerbaijan refuses to allow passage amid its ongoing illegal blockade of the Lachin Corridor, which has resulted in a humanitarian crisis in Nagorno-Karabakh.

Kasprzyk told reporters that he's visiting the entrance of the Lachin Corridor at the instruction of Chairperson-in-Office of the OSCE Björn Enkblom.



People wait in a line outside a bakery in Stepanakert, August 8, 2023.

Bread Shortage Worsens in Karabakh

By Susan Badalian

STEPANAKERT (Azatutyun) — Authorities in Nagorno-Karabakh have urged local farmers to sell wheat harvested by them amid a deepening shortage of bread resulting from Azerbaijan's eight-month blockade of the Lachin corridor.

Bread appears to have become the main staple food in Stepanakert and other Karabakh towns since Baku tightened the blockade in mid-June by halting all relief supplies to the Armenian-populated region carried out by Russian peacekeepers and the International Committee of the Red Cross. Local food stores have run out of limited amounts of other basic other foodstuffs sold in previ-

ous months.

The bread shortage worsened in recent days, with Stepanakert residents saying that they now have to spend more hours waiting in lines to buy up to loaves per person from bakeries.

"When you stand in a line you lose a whole day," one of them, Arega Ishkhanian, told RFE/RL's Armenian Service. "If you queue up at six in the evening, you may have to wait until the next morning."

"And the problem is not just bread, there is nothing else available," she said. "But at least the kids could eat bread."

In a statement issued on Sunday, August 27, Karabakh's Agricultural Fund said it is supplying additional quantities of flour

to bakeries to try to alleviate the problem. Underscoring its gravity, the agency said the authorities are ready to buy up all wheat grown and stored by Karabakh farmers and to quickly pay for it in cash. It urged the farmers to sell off their wheat stocks.

The authorities are facing growing calls to introduce bread coupons and thus reduce waiting lines formed outside bakeries and shops.

The Armenian government warned in July that Karabakh is now "on the verge of starvation." It urged the international community to put stronger pressure on Azerbaijan to lift the blockade.

The United States, the European Union and Russia have repeatedly called for renewed commercial and humanitarian traffic through the sole road connecting Karabakh to Armenia. Baku has dismissed their appeals.

Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev made it clear on Saturday that he will not bow to the international pressure. Visiting the town of Lachin close to Karabakh's lifeline road, Aliyev said Baku's actions are aimed at "fully restoring Azerbaijan's territorial integrity."

"Nothing can force us to deviate from our path," he said.

Karabakh Rejects Azeri Aid Offer

By Ruzanna Stepanian

STEPANAKERT (Azatutyun) — Nagorno-Karabakh's leadership on Tuesday, August 29, dismissed an Azerbaijani proposal to provide the Armenian-populated region with food that has been in short supply due to Baku's eight-month blockade of the Lachin corridor.

The government-linked Azerbaijan Red Crescent announced in the morning that it is sending two trucks loaded with 40 tons of flour to the town of Aghdam adjacent to Karabakh and hopes that the Karabakh Armenians will accept the shipment. It also expressed readiness to deliver other basic foodstuffs.

The Azerbaijani offer came as Karabakh struggled with a worsening shortage of bread that has become the main staple food in Stepanakert and other Karabakh towns since Baku tightened the blockade in mid-June.

A spokeswoman for Arayik Harutyunyan, the Karabakh president, rejected the offer as a ploy designed to deflect international attention from the blockade and a serious humanitarian crisis caused by it. Lusine Avanesyan said Baku should instead allow renewed traffic through the only road connecting Karabakh to Armenia in line with a Russian-brokered ceasefire that stopped the 2020 Armenian-Azerbaijani war.

"If the Azerbaijani authorities are really interested in ending the worst humanitarian disaster of the people of Artsakh and stopping their genocide, then instead of playing false philanthropy they should stop block-

ing the restoration of supplies to Artsakh through the Lachin Corridor envisaged by the tripartite declaration of November 9, 2020 and the orders of the International Court of Justice," Avanesyan told the Artsakhpress news agency.

Harutyunyan likewise ruled out accepting any aid through the Aghdam route when he addressed hundreds of people who rallied in Stepanakert's central square on Monday night.

"Only one road will be functioning, the Lachin road. We're not going to bring in food from any other places," Harutyunyan told the angry crowd in a speech repeatedly interrupted by jeers and heckling. This was the only part of his speech that drew applause.

The spontaneous rally was triggered by the arrests at an Azerbaijani checkpoint in the Lachin corridor of three Karabakh men who traveled to Armenia in a convoy escorted by Russian peacekeepers. The Azerbaijani authorities accused them of desecrating an Azerbaijani flag in 2021.

The protesters demanded that the authorities in Stepanakert take urgent measures to secure the release of the young men. Harutyunyan addressed them after midnight following an emergency meeting with his top aides as well as other leading Karabakh politicians.

The Karabakh leader said the question of his resignation, which has repeatedly come to the fore during the Azerbaijani blockade, was also on the agenda. He said he will decide in the coming days whether or not to step down.

Artsakh President Says He's Ready To Resign

STEPANAKERT (Panorama.am) — Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh) President Arayik Harutyunyan has confirmed his readiness to step down and join the militia.

Addressing a rally in Stepanakert on August 28, Harutyunyan said he considered resignation a few days ago, Artsakh journalist Tatevik Aghajanyan reported.

His comments came after an extended sitting of the Artsakh National Assembly. The demonstrators gathered at Stepanakert's Renaissance Square hours after Azerbaijani border guards kidnapped three young Artsakh men in the Lachin Corridor, accusing them of "mocking the Azerbaijani flag" in 2021.

Harutyunyan rejected any humanitarian supplies to Artsakh via an alternative route bypassing the Lachin Corridor blocked by Baku for more than eight months now.



ARMENIA

Canada Deepens Engagement with Armenia While It Ponders Lifting Embargo on Turkey

By Fin DePencier

Canada is raising its diplomatic profile in the Caucasus, as domestic and foreign policy considerations are pushing Ottawa into the thick of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

Canadian Foreign Minister Mélanie Joly is expected to attend the opening of a Canadian embassy in Yerevan in September. Canada is also set to become the first third-party state to join the EU Mission in Armenia (EUMA), under which unarmed observers monitor conditions along Armenia's side of the frontier with Azerbaijan. The mission strives to "contribute to human security in conflict-affected areas in Armenia," as well as foster better Armenian-Azerbaijani relations. Canada's observers will be drawn from the ranks of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, a source with direct knowledge of the arrangement told Eurasianet.

Canada's interest in South Caucasus security appears connected to an ongoing diplomatic tussle with Turkey. Canadian officials announced their decision to join the EU monitoring mission just days after NATO's annual summit in Lithuania, where Ottawa reportedly reopened talks with Turkey about the export of Canadian defense technology. Canada canceled military export permits to Turkey in 2021, after receiving "credible evidence" that Turkey transferred Canadian-made technology to Azerbaijan that was then used to great

effect in the 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh war. "This use was not consistent with Canadian foreign policy, nor end-use assurances given by Turkey," said former Canadian foreign minister Marc Garneau.

In exchange for supporting Sweden's NATO bid, Turkey is demanding that its NATO allies, Canada included, drop embargoes on defense technology. A Reuters report cited an unnamed Turkish official as saying it was unacceptable for NATO allies to impose export restrictions on each other.

During the 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh war, drones played a major role in helping Azerbaijan recapture large swathes of territory. Amidst the fighting, Armenian forces shot down a Turkish-made TB2 Bayraktar drone, which was equipped with what Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan said was an "ultramodern optical unit that was produced in Canada." The component was indeed the MX-15D targeting system, made by Canadian defense manufacturer L3 Harris Wescam. "It's the brains of the system," Chris Kilford, Canada's former military attaché to Turkey, told Eurasianet.

Without sufficient air defenses, the Armenian military suffered heavy losses from attacks by Azerbaijan's fleet of TB2s. And it was this Canadian component that was critical to the drones' effectiveness.

"I think what will happen is that the embargo will be lifted, but it will come with certain export controls," Kilford said. Canada is hoping, it appears, that by joining the EU border monitoring mission in Armenia,

it can hedge against any potential political fallout of lifting the embargo. Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's government doesn't want to create complications for NATO by maintaining the embargo, but neither does it want to alienate a small, but influential domestic constituency, the country's Armenian diaspora community.

"The government here might be weighing up the domestic damage that could be done by lifting the embargo," Kilford said, referring to the potential for vocal diaspora opposition. Canada's next federal election won't take place until 2025, but the popularity of Trudeau's Liberal Party is sagging, and the government already faces an uphill struggle to retain power.

Joly already seems to be vigorously courting diaspora support. On August 20, she met with representatives of a diaspora organization, the Armenian National Committee of Canada (ANCC), during which they presented policy recommendations to ease hardships faced by Armenians in Karabakh. Joly also spoke at an annual festival of diaspora Armenians, held in Montreal from August 18-20, saying that Canada would play an active role in troubleshooting Karabakh-related issues. "It is important for Canada to play a very important role in the region," Joly said in a video distributed via the @301arm channel on the platform formerly known as Twitter. "Armenians are facing a real threat in Artsakh." Joly's use of the term Artsakh, which is the Armenian word for the contested enclave,

certainly pleased her Montreal audience, but its use in diplomatic dealings would be sure to alienate Azerbaijan.

While Kilford believes the embargo will ultimately be lifted, Canada could still block Turkey from importing the targeting pods from L3 Harris Wescam. Yet, even if Canada does so, the Turkish defense industry appears close to producing a suitable replacement. After Canada initially canceled its permits, Turkey developed its own targeting system for TB2s called CATS, made by Turkish defense manufacturer Aselsan. "I've visited many of Turkey's arms manufacturers over the years. If they have to rely on their own CATS systems, it will become better and better," Kilford said.

The main reason for Canada's increased engagement with Armenia, Kilford says, is to exert a greater degree of influence over future developments, including the possible normalization of relations between Armenia and its Turkic neighbors.

While the EU monitoring mission has faced criticism over its inability to deter sporadic fighting along the border, it is still useful "in the margins," said analyst Eric Hacopian. The patrols increase the potential political cost Azerbaijan could pay for conducting potential military operations on Armenian territory, he added.

(Fin DePencier is a Canadian freelance journalist and photographer based in Yerevan. This article originally appeared on Eurasianet.org on August 24.)



Armenian Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan, left, with Park Jin, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Korea

Armenian FM Briefs Korean Counterpart on Artsakh Crisis

LJUBLJANA, Slovenia (Public Radio of Armenia) — On a visit to Slovenia, Armenian Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan had a meeting with Park Jin, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Korea.

The two discussed the perspectives of expanding the bilateral agenda and deepening cooperation in areas of mutual interest, expressing readiness to take steps towards more effective use of the existing potential. The sectors of trade, economy, science, education, culture, as well as the areas of innovation and high technologies, were indicated as promising directions for cooperation. In this context, the importance of expansion of effective cooperation with the Korea International Cooperation Agency was emphasized.

Mirzoyan briefed his counterpart on the details of the deepening humanitarian crisis in Nagorno-Karabakh resulting from Azerbaijan's 8-month-long illegal blockade of the Lachin corridor, drawing attention to the severe challenges unfolded for particularly vulnerable groups – children, women, the elderly and people with chronic diseases, in conditions of the acute shortage of food, medicine and essential goods.

Mirzoyan highlighted that by its actions Azerbaijan not only is grossly violating the fundamental norms of international humanitarian law and human rights, but also is showing clear disrespect to the Orders of the International Court of Justice of February 22 and July 6, by keeping the Lachin corridor blocked.

Liechtenstein Prince Asks for Azerbaijan to Lift Blockade

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — Prince Michael of Liechtenstein and other humanitarian leaders have expressed readiness to lead a humanitarian airlift to Nagorno-Karabakh amid the Azeri blockade.

Switzerland's Impact Investing Solutions announced on August 28 that Prince Michael of Liechtenstein, has expressed his readiness to "lead a humanitarian airlift to besieged Nagorno-Karabakh (Artsakh) and to be on the board that will fly to the region, bringing much-needed food and medication arranged by the Aznavour Foundation."

"We from Impact Investing Solutions from Switzerland, who is partnering in facilitating this humanitarian mission, together with H.S.H. Prince Michael, other world leaders, current and former heads of state are also ready to lead necessary airlifts to Nagorno-Karabakh, where 120,000 people, including 30,000 children, have been deprived of food and medication for more than 8 months already," Impact Investing Solutions said in a statement.

A call to organize a humanitarian airlift to Nagorno-Karabakh was first made in December 2022 by a group of global humanitarian leaders, including Leymah Gbowee, Nobel Peace Prize Laureate; Bernard Kouchner, former French Foreign Minister and former Minister of Health, Paul Polman, climate and equalities campaigner; former CEO of Unilever; Mary Robinson, former President of Ireland; Ernesto Zedillo, former President of Mexico and many more human rights defenders and peace activists.

"An international humanitarian airlift is being organized, delivering food and other



Prince Michael of Liechtenstein

essentials to the local population and evacuating those whose life is endangered to safety. Among these are several patients of the Republican Medical Centre Stepanakert in grave conditions requiring urgent medical care that cannot be adequately provided because of the blockade. In the meantime, while the road remains blocked, the humanitarian airlift should help the local population to survive and sustain. There already is an operational airport in Stepanakert, which can be used for this purpose. This will not require any additional efforts on the side of the international community except for those necessary to maintain the airlift and ensure its safety. Currently, there is a call to World Food Programme (WFP) and the Red Cross to organize the flight in the nearest days, and H.S.H. Prince Michael of Liechtenstein is ready to lead the first humanitarian mission."

"Let's rally together to bring aid and relief to Nagorno-Karabakh," the organization added.

INTERNATIONAL

Iran Reiterates Support For Armenia Borders

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — Iran has reiterated its support to Armenia's territorial integrity and sovereignty.

Ambassador of Iran to Armenia Mehdi Sobhani, on August 25, said that Iran “defends the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Armenia.”

“Our principled policy is to develop relations with the Republic of Armenia. We defend Armenia's territorial integrity and sovereignty,” Sobhani told reporters during an economic exhibition in Yerevan.

French FM Condemns Baku's 'Immoral' Tactics

PARIS (Panorama.am) — France will help create conditions for a just and lasting peace between Armenia and Azerbaijan, French Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs Catherine Colonna said on August 28.

“France will mobilize its efforts to help create conditions for a just and lasting peace between Armenia and Azerbaijan, delimit the borders between the two countries and offer the people of Nagorno-Karabakh the opportunity to live there with respect for their rights, culture and history,” she told French ambassadors to countries around the world.

“The strategy of choking aimed at a mass exodus of Armenians from Nagorno-Karabakh is illegal, as confirmed by the International Court of Justice. It is also immoral,” the foreign minister stressed.

Armenia Finishes 4th In FIDE Rapid Team Championship

YEREVAN (Panorama.am) — The Armenian team took the 4th place in the FIDE World Rapid Team Championship 2023 held in Dusseldorf, Germany, on August 25-29, the Chess Federation said.

The team members were Gabriel Sargissian, Haik Martirosyan, Shant Sargsyan, Samvel Ter-Sahakyan, Mamikon Gharibyan, Elina Danielian and Alberto Atoyan.

A brilliant game was shown by 14-year-old Alberto Atoyan, who scored 10.5 points out of 12 and showed the best result among the 286 participants of the championship. Alberto also improved his rapid rating by 170 points.

Aliyev Refuses to Meet With Visiting Belgian FM

YEREVAN (PanARMENIAN.Net) — Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev refused to meet visiting Belgian Foreign Minister Hadja Lahbib on August 24 because of what local news media described as the Minister's “pro-Armenian” statements made earlier in Yerevan.

APA news agency reported that Aliyev usually meets visiting foreign ministers but he has snubbed Lahbib over her “pro-Armenian position.”

Lahbib said during her visit to Armenia that Azerbaijan must open the Lachin Corridor and ensure the security of the Armenian population in Karabakh.

German Government Quiet as Genocide Looms in Artsakh

By Muriel Mirak-Weissbach

Special to the *Mirror-Spectator*

A century ago, when the Young Turk regime committed genocide against the Armenians and other Christian minorities, Germany, its wartime ally, could have intervened, but did not. Single individuals, like Johannes Lepsius, Consul Walter Rössler, and General Liman von Sanders, to name a few, did what they could to protect the targeted groups. When the German Ambassador in Constantinople in late 1915 wrote to Berlin urging government action to stop the persecution and massacres, Imperial Chancellor Theobald von Bethmann Hollweg replied, “Our only aim is to keep Turkey on our side until the end of the war, no matter whether as a result Armenians do perish or not.” In 2016 the German Bundestag (Parliament) passed a resolution on genocide recognition, and the issue of historical responsibility pervaded the debate. Several members quoted Bethmann Hollweg's infamous remark, to warn against repetition of such complicity by inaction.

Now, as the Azerbaijani blockade threatens genocide in Nagorno-Karabakh, the question is again on the agenda: where does Germany stand? Now, as then, prominent individuals, human rights lawyers, civil society groups, historians, and some press organs are speaking out, organizing demonstrations, and issuing calls to the government to act before it is too late. The government in Berlin, to date, has not gone beyond expressions of concern and support for negotiations between Armenia and Azerbaijan.

Informing the Public

Throughout July, coverage of the Karabakh crisis in Germany's major press was generally scanty and non-committal, presenting “both sides” of the conflict, and carefully avoiding any reference to genocide. Some national media acknowledged the gravity of the crisis; on August 10, *Die Zeit* ran a piece, “Forgotten by the World,” and *Junge Welt* reported wrote of an “Exclave Starved.” As soon as the expert opinion of former International Criminal Court Prosecutor Luis Moreno Ocampo was released on August 9, the international press picked up the news of a genocide threat. In Germany, most national newspapers and media reported it objectively.

Human rights advocate and genocide scholar Tessa Hofmann, whose interview with Orbeli Analytical Research Center was published in the *Mirror-Spectator* last week, was called on for her analysis. *Neues Deutschland* carried a major article on August 18 entitled, “Nagorno-Karabakh: Genocide in the Caucasus,” which began with a straightforward characterization of Ocampo's conclusions: “The Dictator of Azerbaijan, Ilham Aliyev, is acting with genocidal intentions.”

Speaking to author Melanie M. Klimmer, Eastern Europe expert Hofmann provided statistics of malnutrition among pregnant women, deaths of premature babies, as well as details on lack of fuel. Despite the appeals by Artsakh President Arayik Harutyunyan, who characterized the situation as a “concentration camp,” Hofmann went on, there are no sanctions threatening the Baku regime, “since the country has become more important than ever for the EU as energy provider in the shadow of the Ukraine war.” Dr. Gerayer Koutcharian, co-founder with Hofmann of the human rights group AGA, was also asked for comment and called for EU sanctions against Azerbaijan as well as an ICC investigation of the matter.

Significantly, the article deals with the precedent in the 1915 genocide, when Germany stood by as the Young Turk regime used hunger as well as massacres to kill. “I expect from the German government, therefore,” Koutcharian continued, “that it not passively look on, once again, when Armenians are to be eliminated.” Hofmann added that the “first step towards a peaceful solution in the South Caucasus” would be recognition of the genocide on the part of Turkey, which persists in denial. Further indications of genocidal intentions can be seen in warnings issued last August by the Lemkin Institute and the International Association of Genocide Scholars; Hofmann said the genocide has been in preparation in Azerbaijan's schools and press for decades, dissidents are politically persecuted while killers of Armenians are hailed as heroes.

And the role of Russia? Hofmann's assessment is sober. The fact that Azerbaijani sharpshooters have been killing Armenian

farmers in their fields “sometimes in the presence of Russian peacekeepers,” she sees as indication that they “cannot, and apparently do not want to protect them.” If Russia were to leave the November 2020 truce deal, that would be “a paradigm shift in its South Caucasus policy.” Koutcharian's view is that Russia must at least guarantee free passage of persons and goods.

On August 22, the *Tagesspiegel* carried a lengthy OpEd by Hofmann, entitled, “Is Genocide against the Armenians Taking Place in Nagorno-Karabakh?”, which presented the current situation on the ground, the political background, and the economic-geopolitical context measures in detail.

And the Government?

As of this writing, the German government has taken no visible measures. However, among press organs, the Deutschlandfunk (DLF: Radio Germany), the national public broadcasting service, has increasingly dealt with the accelerating crisis. On August 17, DLF broadcast a story, “Threat of Genocide in Europe's Borders?” Correspondent Marianna Deinyan reported in detail on the catastrophic food, medicine, and fuel shortages, citing cases of families scraping by on bread. She quoted Karabakh Armenians who said their greatest fear was that if their government capitulated to Baku's demands, there would be genocide. “If our government accepted Azerbaijan's demands and gave up Nagorno-Karabakh, I fear that we will be killed in our houses by Azerbaijan – as was the case in 1915,” were the words of 23-year-old Shogher Sargsyan in Stepanakert.

This “tough term” was not only used by Armenians, DHL reported, but also by Ocampo. As to forecasts for future developments, the message was that, though the UN Security Council called for opening the Lachin Corridor, it must be remembered that Azerbaijan had rejected previous demands from international authorities.

Less than a week later, on August 22, DLF broadcast a report on the “horrible news” from the region. East Europe expert

Gesine Dornblut, who had visited the region in early June and witnessed the difficulties, was asked why there is so little coverage and discussion of the crisis. She answered that experts on the region are concerned with Ukraine, and that since 2020, there has been no independent press and no access for journalists, except for those invited by the Baku government to visit the liberated regions. She stressed the huge gap between Armenia and Azerbaijan, as far as free press is concerned. She went on to elaborate on the political and military dimensions to the conflict. As to the future, she said, it was difficult; Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan is ready to acknowledge Azerbaijani sovereignty over Karabakh if Armenian rights are protected, but this is a condition Aliyev refuses. She concluded that given the deep mistrust, she sees no chances for peace.

ARMENIAN PRIME MINISTER NIKOL PASHINYAN IS READY TO ACKNOWLEDGE AZERBAIJANI SOVEREIGNTY OVER KARABAKH IF ARMENIAN RIGHTS ARE PROTECTED, BUT THIS IS A CONDITION ALIYEV REFUSES.

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Growing Protest

Increasing press coverage is vital to informing the general public of the danger of genocide in Artsakh, but more will be required before the German government takes action. Members of the Armenian community in Germany are called on to organize public protest actions, and to escalate political pressure through letters to the press and government officials. On August 23, the Society for Threatened Peoples is organizing a vigil in front of the German Chancellor's office in Berlin, to demand the following: “Prevent Genocide in Nagorno-Karabakh/Artsakh, Mr. Scholz! Azerbaijan Must End Hunger Blockade!” Together with Armenians from the capital, they will present Chancellor Olaf Scholz with the demand to prevent a genocide in Nagorno-Karabakh.

At the same time, the Central Council of Armenians in Germany (ZAD) has issued a press release calling on the German political leadership to rethink its relations to Azerbaijan in view of the current crisis. Citing the genocide alert issued by the Lemkin Institute, the first reported case of death by starvation in Artsakh, and the lack of food, fuel, and medical aid, the ZAD stresses the “genocidal intention” of the Azerbaijani regime. In this situation, the ZAD calls for a critical rethinking of relations, as current “precarious conditions make upholding the status quo untenable. Innocent lives are at stake and the danger of a serious crime of genocide cannot be ignored.” Thus, it demands the government take concrete steps to overcome this crisis.



INTERNATIONAL

Azerbaijan Nabs 3 More Artsakh Armenians on Bogus Charges

ARRESTS, from page 1

The ministry condemned the latest detentions as well. It described them as a further indication that Baku intends to “avoid dialogue with Nagorno-Karabakh by all means and continue instead its policy of ethnic cleansing.”

Khachatryan is the first Karabakh patient arrested by the Azerbaijani authorities during regular medical evacuations organized by the ICRC after Baku halted last December commercial traffic through the only road connecting Karabakh to Armenia.

Last week, Baku also allowed other categories of Karabakh’s population, notably university students and holders of Russian passports, to travel to Armenia. They are escorted by Russian peacekeepers.

The Armenian Foreign Ministry issued a statement decrying the arrests.

The statement said, in part: “According to point 6 of the tripartite statement of November 9, they [Russian peacekeepers] had to control the uninterrupted connection between Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh through the Lachin Corridor. The mentioned persons were moving to the Republic of Armenia to continue their studies. This step of Azerbaijan, which was preceded on July 29 by the kidnapping of 68-year-old Vagif Khachatryan, who was being transferred to the Republic of Armenia in order to receive immediate medical assistance by the International Committee of the Red Cross, in 2020. It is a gross violation of the tripartite declaration of November 9, the legally binding decisions of the UN International Court of Justice, and an open contempt for the unequivocal and direct calls of the international community, including the members of the UN Security



President of the Artsakh Republic Arayik Harutyunyan held a sitting of the Security Council

Council.”

The statement added, “These incidents, which took place under various false pretexts, allow us to have a reasonable fear that Azerbaijan is openly planning to subject the entire people of Nagorno Karabakh to collective punishment, which in the 90s of the previous century and in 2020. had to face the large-scale aggres-

sion unleashed by Azerbaijan and defend his right to peaceful life in his homeland. Regardless of age, gender, health status, the entire population of Nagorno-Karabakh is deprived of all fundamental rights, subjected to starvation, blocking the supply of medicine, essential goods, gas, electricity, targeting civilians by snipers and terrorizing the entire people by means

of kidnappings, blocking the Lachin Corridor. shows the real aspirations of the leadership of Azerbaijan to avoid dialogue with Nagorno-Karabakh and instead continue its policy of ethnic cleansing. Instead of supporting the steps aimed at establishing peace and stability in the region, the Azerbaijani side has obviously invested all its efforts in defeating them.”

UK Church Leaders Appeal to Prime Minister To Intervene in Artsakh Crisis

LONDON — Churches Together in England President Archbishop Nikitas and General Secretary Bishop Mike Royal are among church leaders who have signed a joint letter to the Prime Minister Rishi Sunak and sent to him on August 23.

The letter has been coordinated by the Primate of the Armenian Church of the United Kingdom and Ireland Bishop Hovakim Manukyan. It asks that the UK government’s “actions will be timely to save the lives of tens of thousands of people on the verge of dying as a direct result of the current blockade.”

Since December 2022, 120,000 Christian Armenians, including elderly people, women and 30,000 children, have been suffering the consequences of the blockade of the Lachin corridor imposed by Azerbaijan.

“We write to you to seek the urgent intervention of His Majesty’s Government in stopping an act of cruelty and aggression that is leading to the suffering and deaths of Armenians in Nagorno Karabakh,” the letter starts.

“Azerbaijan’s blockade of the Lachin Corridor, now in its ninth month, has created a situation described earlier this month by a former Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court as follows: ‘Starvation is the invisible Genocide weapon. Without immediate dramatic change, this group of Armenians will be destroyed in a few weeks.’ The Lemkin Institute for Genocide Prevention has a ‘Red Flag Alert for Genocide’ about the current situation, and Genocide Watch issued a “Genocide Warning” as early as September 2022,” it goes on to say.

Since 12th December of last year, 120,000 Christian Armenians, including elderly people, women and 30,000

CoE Human Rights Commissioner Asks for End to Blockade

YEREVAN (Armenpress) — Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights Dunja Mijatović has again called for restoration of free movement along Lachin Corridor and confirmed readiness to travel to Nagorno-Karabakh to assist in overcoming the existing human rights challenges.

In a statement released on August 28, Mijatović expressed serious concern about the humanitarian situation in Nagorno-Karabakh (Artsakh).

“I remain seriously concerned about the humanitarian situation in Nagorno-Karabakh and the human rights of its population following the blocking of the road running through the Lachin Corridor since December 2022. I reiterate the call I made at that time to restore free movement along that road.

“Despite my calls and those of numerous other international stakeholders, the humanitarian and human rights situation in the area has reportedly further deteriorated, affecting particularly the most vulnerable, due to the prolonged disruption in the movement of people and access to food supplies and urgent medical care. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), which is for the moment the only international humanitarian organization operating across the Lachin Corridor, indicated that the population was facing a lack of life-saving medication and essentials.

“The relevant stakeholders should immediately find a solution to avoid any further deterioration of the very dangerous situation the local population is facing and guarantee safe and free passage to those providing humanitarian assistance and those ensuring human rights protection. As indicated in my 2021 Memorandum, efforts should be made by Armenia and Azerbaijan to



Dunja Mijatović

move forward on the path towards reconciliation and ensure lasting peace for all people.

“I confirm my commitment and readiness to engage with all the relevant interlocutors and to travel to Nagorno Karabakh to assist in overcoming the existing human rights challenges,” Mijatović said in the statement.

Lachin Corridor, the only road connecting Nagorno-Karabakh to Armenia and the rest of the world, has been blocked by Azerbaijan since late 2022. Azerbaijan then illegally installed a checkpoint on Lachin Corridor. The blockade has led to shortages of essential products such as food and medication. Azerbaijan has also cut off gas and power supply into Nagorno Karabakh, with officials warning that Baku seeks to commit ethnic cleansing against Armenians in Nagorno-Karabakh. Hospitals have suspended normal operations.

Community News

Gerard Libaridian To Present New Book, *Precarious Armenia*, in Talk

BELMONT, Mass. — The National Association for Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR) will present a hybrid (in-person and online) talk by Dr. Gerard J. Libaridian on Tuesday, September 12, at 7:30 p.m. (Eastern), in which he will discuss his new book, *A Precarious Armenia: The Third Republic, the Karabakh Conflict, and Genocide Politics*.

This program is presented as part of the NAASR/Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation Lecture Series on Contemporary Armenian Issues and will be held at the NAASR Vartan Gregorian Building, 395 Concord Ave. It is free and open to the public. Copies of *A Precarious Armenia* will be available for purchase and signing by the author.

The webinar will be accessible live on Zoom (registration required) and on NAASR's YouTube Channel. To register go to <https://bit.ly/NAASR-Libaridian>.

In his newest publication of selected essays and interviews, Libaridian explores a number of fundamental issues regarding Armenia's foreign



Prof. Gerard J. Libaridian

and security policies and scrutinizes the political culture as the framework within which positions have been defined and solutions have been sought.

The previously published and unpublished material analyzes the political thinking that characterized the response to challenges the Third Republic faced and failed to address from the standpoint of statehood versus a vague but powerful nationalism. Libaridian considers themes such as Armenia and Armenians as agents of their own history as opposed to the dominant sense of victimhood, maximalism confused with patriotism, the role of mediators and other states as saviors, and the comfort zone of illusions and legends as opposed to hard realism and pragmatism.

Libaridian served as senior adviser to the former President of Armenia, Levon Ter-Petrosyan and was the director of Armenian Studies Program and held the Alex Manoogian Chair in Modern Armenian History at the University of Michigan. He is the author of numerous books including *The Challenge of Statehood: Armenian Political Thinking since Independence* (1999) and *Modern Armenia: People, Nation, State* (2007).

For more information contact NAASR at hq@naasr.org.



Rev. Archpriest A. Baljian and School Board Chair Michael Guzelian honoring Principal Boyamian for her 35 years of service (Kataram Studios photo)

SSAES Holds Graduation Ceremonies

WATERTOWN — St. Stephen's Armenian Elementary School (SSAES) successfully completed its 39th academic year, thanks to the efforts of a dedicated teaching staff, individualized instruction, specialist teachers, updated teaching materials, curriculum and technology, many after school enrichment programs and a comprehensive assessment program.

The graduation ceremonies were held on June 15 (Kindergarten) and June 16 (elementary) in the presence of an enthusiastic crowd of parents and friends of the school. Both programs were dedicated to the importance of a strong bond between Armenia, Artsakh and the diaspora. This theme was presented through songs, poems and Armenian dance. On both days, the students surprised Houry Boyamian, who is retiring after serving as principal of the school for 35 years, with beautiful songs dedicated to her.

In her remarks, Boyamian expressed her deep love and appreciation to her teaching and administrative staff, conveyed her warm feelings to the school's former and current parents, wished success to all her students and graduates and thanked the School Board and Committees, the St. Stephen's Church Pastor and Board of Trustees, the Armenian Cultural and Educational Center and all the individuals and organizations that contribute to the school's advancement. She also, extended her best wishes to the new head of school, Dr. Garine Palandjian.

Archbishop Anoushavan Tanielian, Prelate of the Armenian Eastern Prelacy, who could not be present at these events, had sent a letter to Boyamian presented to her by Rev. Antranig Baljian. Representatives of the School Board of Directors, Meher Nerkizian, treasurer, and Michael Guzelian, chair, also expressed their appreciation to Boyamian.

Baljian and Guzelian presented her a Certificate of Appreciation from Archbishop Tanielian. Guzelian announced that the School Board is planning two major events in 2023 and 2024 to celebrate Boyamian's career and accomplishments.

On June 15, Boyamian and Preschool Director Maral Orchanian honored three preschool teachers for their dedicated longtime service: Music and NII Teacher, Yelena Hakopyan (11 years), NI Teacher, Svetlana Vehapetian (21 years), NII Maral Derderian (33 years). Boyamian honored also, Diane Chiappinelli who is retiring this year, after serving as Kindergarten teacher for seven years.

On June 16, Boyamian honored two elementary teachers for their longtime service: Computer and Math Resource Teacher Michele Arthur (10 years) and Physical Education Teacher, Richard Samaria (12 years). Rev. Archpriest Antranig Baljian and Boyamian honored also Arlet Ashjian who retired from her administrative assistant position after 17 years of service with a Certificate of Recognition from the Armenian Prelacy.

On June 15, the following students graduated from Kindergarten: Annabelle Apehlian, Luseh Avakian, Karina Badrikian, Raquelle Balian, Christian Barsoumian, Ani Brown, Alik Etyemezian, Meghety Garabedian, Vahan Garabedian, Naro Karagueuzian, Bronson Mancilikli, Isabelle Manjikian, Nairi Mardiros, Aurelian

continued on next page

Portantino Introduces Resolution Urging Azerbaijan to End Blockade of Artsakh

SACRAMENTO, Calif. — California State Senator Anthony J. Portantino (D – Burbank) introduced Senate Joint Resolution 9, which calls on Azerbaijan to end its inhumane blockade of Artsakh and ensure the free and adequate flow of food, medicine, and humanitarian goods through the Lachin corridor.

"The situation in Artsakh is dire and deeply troubling," stated Senator Portantino. "As a genocide is unfolding before our eyes, we must act. The people of Artsakh cannot afford to wait another day without strong United States and international action to bring an end to this devastating humanitarian crisis. It is critical that we move beyond words, demand the re-opening of the Lachin Corridor, and cut off military aid to Azerbaijan. I strongly condemn Azerbaijan's violent and genocidal campaign against the Armenian people of Artsakh, who have been left without food, medical supplies and the right to free movement."

In September 2020, Azerbaijan launched a war of territorial expansion against the Armenians of Artsakh that resulted in the ethnic cleansing of over 70 percent of Artsakh territory. Azerbaijan perpetrated widely documented human rights abuses, including the unlawful targeting of schools, homes, hospitals, and churches with prohibited weapons. For more than eight months, 120,000 people have been under the blockade and for the last 2 months, in total isolation from food, water, medical supplies, fuel, electricity, and other basic needs.

Recently, the former chief prosecutor of the International Criminal Court warned that Azerbaijan is preparing genocide against ethnic Armenian in the Artsakh region and called for the United Nations Security Council to bring the matter before the international tribunal.

In 2014, the California State Legislature adopted AJR 32, which supported the Republic of Artsakh as a free and independent nation. Earlier this year, Senator Portantino led efforts to submit a letter to the White House urging President Biden to take action against Azerbaijan by immediately ending military assistance and requesting that emergency humanitarian aid be delivered to the people of Artsakh. Unfortunately, concrete steps against Azerbaijan have yet to be taken and California needs to continue to have its voice heard in Washington.

Portantino has visited Armenia and Artsakh on a number of occasions. In 2021, he became the first state or federal official to visit Artsakh after the 44-day war. He continues to chair the Senate Select Committee on California, Armenia, and Artsakh Mutual Trade, Art, and Cultural Exchange, which was first established in 2017 at the request of Portantino to expand business opportunities through trade, economic development, cultural awareness, and education between California, Armenia, and Artsakh.



COMMUNITY NEWS



Kindergarten graduates (Kataram Studios photo)

from previous page

Mardirosian, Lincoln Markarian, Azad Massouyan, Aramayis Melikyan, Alexander Mikaelian, Aram Nerkizian, Edward Simonyan and Niko Soukiassian.

On June 16, the following students graduated from the elementary school: Lusine Agajanyan, Natalia Behbahani, Zaven Bell, Serli Garabedian, Chloe Kebabjian, Nareg Mardiros, Tro Melkonian, Richard Smith-Faniants, Arianna Tinkjian and Victoria Torosyan.

2023 Graduating Class Awards

I-Prelacy Award for Excellence in Armenian or in Armenian History (silver coin of Levon the 1st):

In Armenian

Natalia Behbahani, Serli Garabedian, Richard Smith Faniants, Arianna Tinkjian, Victoria Torosyan,

In Armenian History

Zaven Bell and Tro Melkonian

II- Armenian Relief Society Award: Nareg Mardiros for excelling in Armenian History

III-School's Education Committee Award: Lusine Agajanyan and Chloe Kebabjian (for their interest and effort in the Armenian language).

IV- President's Education Awards- Gr. 5 -Presidential Award for Academic Excellence: Tro Melkonian and Arianna Tinkjian

-Presidential Award for Outstanding Academic Achievement: Zaven Bell, Victoria Torosyan, Richard Smith Faniants and Serli Garabedian

Presidential Award for Educational Excellence: The purpose of this award is to recognize the academic success of students who have excelled in their studies and who have earned high scores in the Standardized Tests.

Presidential Award for Educational Achievement: The purpose of this award is to reward students who work hard and give their best effort in school

V-American Citizenship Award For Outstanding Leadership and Respectful Behavior towards others: Serli Garabedian and Natalia Behbahani



Elementary graduates (Kataram Studios photo)



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OBITUARY

Naomi Basdekian Zeytoonian

Civic Activist, Writer of 'Dolphin Country' Column

RACINE, Wis. — Naomi Basdekian Zeytoonian passed away peacefully at home on August 3.

She was born November 2, 1934 in Washington, DC, to parents Armenag and Akabe (Aharonian) Basdekian.

She attended schools in DC. After graduation, she worked for the Office of the Surgeon General, moving on to the pentagon

They raised their three children and operated several pharmacies in Watertown and later in Coral Springs, Fla. Being the third Armenian family to settle in Coral Springs, their home was always an open invitation as other Armenian families began to migrate south.

She was an avid member of women's clubs, Zonta International and AIWA (Armenian International Women's Association) where she was awarded "Woman of the Year" in 1993, ACYOA, Daughters of Vartan and the Union of Marash Armenians (UMA). She was a life charter member of the Ft. Lauderdale Armenian General Benevolent Union (AGBU). She was a founding member of the St. Mary Armenian Church in Washington D.C. and also the St. David Armenian Church in Boca Raton, where she also served on the Parish Council and helped organize the parish women's guilds.

Naomi was a charter member of the Daughters of Vartan Siranoush Otyag in Fort Lauderdale Florida and since she moved to Racine in 2009, she has been a member of Hripsime Otyag in

as a secretary to Major Farrell of the Army Signal Corps.

In 1956, she co-chaired the Armenian Church Youth Organization of America (ACYOA) 10th anniversary convention in Washington, DC, where she met the love of her life, Carnig (Carl) Leon Zeytoonian. They married the following year at St. James Armenian Church in Watertown.

Milwaukee.

Naomi was the CEO of USA Temps in Ft. Lauderdale. Always active in civic life, she was the founder of the "Our Town International Food Festival," bringing ethnic groups and their cultures together under one huge tent every year.

She was also dedicated to the local Kids 'n Us program and received several awards

for her community involvement.

She supported her husband's public service as vice mayor and commissioner of Coral Springs; she served on the Planning and Zoning Commission of Coral Springs.

Later in her life in Racine, Wis., where she made her home in 2009, Naomi worked for both Walmart as a cashier and for the Racine County Clerk of Courts until the age of 83.

She was a published author, member of the Metro-Dade media, and was a freelance reporter for the *Armenian Mirror-Spectator* for more than 50 years, writing her "Dolphin Country" column and published in the AGBU's Ararat magazine.

Throughout her life, she worked on a historical novel based on the sinking of the Andrea Doria off the coast of Nantucket in 1956, as well as children's books with her daughter, Meline.

She traveled extensively with her husband and assisted him on his many trips to Armenia bringing wheelchairs for the Wheelchair Foundation of America.

She also loved to dance, and while living in Watertown was one of the original members of the AGBU Tekeyan Ensemble, which later became the Daron Dance Ensemble and then the Sayat Nova Dance Company.

She was predeceased by her husband,

former Knights of Vartan Commander and Deacon Carnig (Carl) Zeytoonian and brothers Capt. Edward Basdekian and Haig Basdekian. She is survived by a sister, Mary Bagdasarian; brothers-in-law Nerses Zeytoonian and Joe Zeytoonian; three children and their spouses, Michael (Lisa Topalian) Zeytoonian, Meline (Avak) Grigorian, Armen (Mary) Zeytoonian and daughter-in-law Rhona (Markarian) Zeytoonian; grandchildren Justin and Nicole Zeytoonian, Noelle and Antonio Lepore, Ani and Zach Kornick, Caitlin and John Hall, Alina Grigorian and Tom Hastreiter, Anoush Grigorian and David Barreto and Molly Zeytoonian; great-grandchildren Tyler and Deacon Zeytoonian, Callie and Madelene Lepore and Leonardo Barreto. In addition, she shared her life with her close Aharonian cousins Garo, Naomi, Vergine, Rafe and Maro and many nieces, nephews and cousins.

A funeral and memorial service will be at the St. Mesrob Armenian Church in Racine, with visitation from 9:30 to 10 a.m. and service following immediately on Tuesday, September 5.

Donations in lieu of flowers may be made to the St. Mesrob Armenian Church or to the Daughters of Vartan.

More info can be found at <https://www.purathstrand.com/>



George Tarvezian Jr.

Active in Many Armenian-American Organizations

WATERTOWN — George Tarvezian, Jr. of Watertown passed away on August 19, 2023 after a long illness.

George was the son of the late George Antranig and Armene (Jamgotchian)

(Andrew) Choly and great-nephew Theodore.

He graduated from Watertown High School and Burdett College.

He worked in real estate investment and management.

He was the past president of the Armenian Students Association, Boston Chapter; member/ supporter of the Armenian General Benevolent Union, National Association for Armenian Studies and Research, Armenian Museum of America, Armenian Assembly of America and the Knights of Vartan, and several other Armenian-American organizations.

Funeral services were privately held at St. James Armenian Apostolic Church and Mt. Auburn Cemetery.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to St. James Armenian Apostolic Church Armene and Veronica Tarvezian Scholarship Funds, National Association for Armenian Studies and Research or Armenian Museum of America.



Tarvezian. He was the brother of the late Veronica Tarvezian. He leaves his brother Richard (Ann) Tarvezian, niece Talene

Maria Gherdian

Longtime Teacher in Boston Public Schools

WALTHAM, Mass. — Maria Gherdian of Waltham passed away peacefully on August 23, 2023 just days before her 94th birthday.

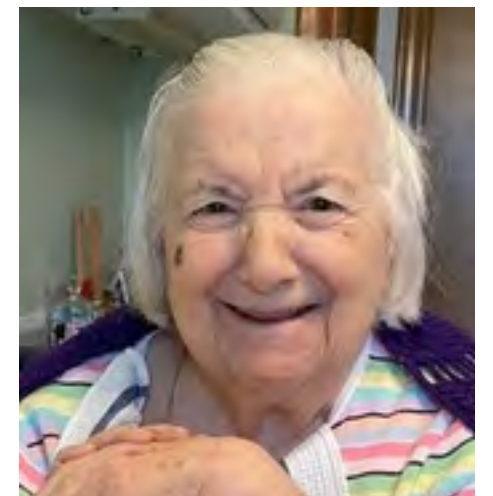
Maria was born on August 26, 1929 in Buenos Aires, Argentina to the late Juan and Yeranuhi (Torosian) Gherdian.

Maria worked for more than 40 years as a high school history teacher in the Boston Public Schools.

She will be remembered for her kindness, generosity, optimistic view of life and her dazzling smile.

She is survived by her sister Beatriz Gherdian of Waltham and brother Juan Gherdian and his wife Odette of Florida. She was predeceased by her siblings Manuel, Ruben and Jacob Gherdian. Additionally, she leaves behind two generations of loving nieces and nephews.

Funeral services were held at St. James Armenian Church, 465 Mt. Auburn Street, on August 30. Interment followed at Mount



Auburn Cemetery in Cambridge.

In lieu of flowers, memorial donations may be made in her memory to Armenian Women's Welfare Association (Armenian Nursing Home), 435 Pond St., Jamaica Plain, MA 02130

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ADVERTISE IN THE MIRROR

Deacons Train for Lifetime of Devotion to Church

By Taylor Manookian Gregory

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

ARMONK, N.Y. — Every summer, the St. Nersess Seminary hosts young men from any of the churches within the Eastern and Western Dioceses of the Armenian Church of America, and the Armenian Diocese of Canada. This year, 24 young members from these different churches gathered in this small town north of New York City to delve deeper into the Divine Liturgy of the Armenian Church, or as it's called in Armenian, the Badarak. This annual conference, which took place this year June 23 to July 2, is called the Deacons' Training Program.

This conference is geared towards Armenian youth who are already serving on the altar at their home parish and would like to take the next step in their service. During the day, the program focuses on classes about the Armenian language and the Badarak, and how the language pertains to the Badarak specifically. At night, guest lecturers come to speak on topics such as the church's impact on the current situation in Artsakh, the role of the church in everyday life, and the role of these future deacons within the church.

Eighteen-year-old Hovsep Seferian was one of the acolytes training this summer. Seferian had taken an interest in St. Nersess because of his lifetime of service at the

altar at his own church parish in Washington, DC.

"I've been serving on the altar for 13 years," Seferian said, "I started when I was 5." He became inspired within recent years to ascend higher in the ranks of his home parish because he realized that the altar is going to eventually need new people to serve once the current generation is no longer able to contribute. "Like everything else, the church eventually has to undertake a changing of the guard," Seferian said about his readiness to be a part of the next generation of deacons.

"I was incredibly inspired by a lot of the deacons at my church. I go to St. Mary's Armenian church in Washington, DC, so people like Deacon Vartkes Keshishian and Deacon Mark Krikorian have been really large figures in my growing up in the church and my growing up as an Armenian," Seferian cites as



Morning Service lead by visiting priest Fr. Vart Gyozyalyan

further reasons why he is pursuing deaconhood. He was inspired to want to follow in their footsteps to become a leader in the church and says that "St Nersess gives you

the opportunity to do that both from a religious perspective, but also being a leader in the community as well."

Seferian has already decided the direction of his involvement within the Armenian Church: he aims to be serving as a deacon for the rest of his life. He briefly considered priesthood, but ultimately decided that being a deacon is the highest rank he will achieve. Despite this, Seferian points out that if he did wish to ascend to priesthood, St. Nersess has all the resources available to help him reach this level.

"The beauty of St Nersess and their pro-



Tekeyan Cultural Association, Inc.



Dr. Nubar Berberian 2023 Annual Awards

Dr. Nubar Berberian, intellectual, journalist, activist and editor of many ADL daily newspapers for more than 50 years passed away at the age of 94 in November 23, 2016. In his Will, Dr. Berberian directed his Trust Fund managers to appropriate awards every year to college students of Armenian descent worldwide who major in either International Law or Political Science.

ELIGIBILITY AND REQUIREMENTS

- 1) Eligible recipients are college students of Armenian descent who major in either International Law or Political Science.
- 2) Applicant must be enrolled in a full-time graduate program in a fully accredited college or university in the world.
- 3) Applicant must provide all of the information requested on the application form.
- 4) Applicant must submit a copy of his or her most recent college transcript.
- 5) Applicant is to include a small head and shoulders self-portrait.
- 6) Application could be received by requesting from Tcadirector@Aol.com.
- 7) Applicants should submit applications electronically (via email) to: Tcadirector@Aol.com.
- 8) The deadline of receiving the applications is **September 30, 2023**.
- 9) The administrators and managers of the fund will vote the qualified winners in **October, 2023** based on the merits of each applicant.
- 10) The winners will receive their awards in **November, 2023**
- 11) Winning applicants are not eligible to apply again.
- 12) This announcement is published in Armenian, English, French and Spanish.

Watertown, MA, August 10, 2023



Primate of the Eastern Diocese of America V. Rev. Mesrop Parsamyan came to visit the Deacons' Training participates and Hovsep Seferian shaking his hand

grams is that if you want that, then you can get it," he said. "St. Nersess makes any level of the Armenian church accessible to anybody who is willing to put in the effort, the time, and the dedication to the Lord and the church."

Seferian has found that through these connections made at St. Nersess and at his home parish, other avenues in which to explore his culture have presented themselves to him. Not only has the church and St. Nersess introduced him to the language and the Divine Liturgy, but also to the food, dancing, music, people, activism involved in spreading awareness about current Armenian events, and general culture.

"The Armenian Church has, in a large way, been the most important part of my life," Seferian said. "It has given me access to the Lord and also it has helped open a door for me to explore the other most important parts of my life which are the other parts of the Armenian culture."

For more information on the Deacons' Training Program, visit the St Nersess website at <https://stnersess.edu/>.

COMMUNITY NEWS

Armenian Heritage Park Hosts Growing Number of Events

BOSTON — Armenian Heritage Park on The Greenway continues to inspire a series of innovative programs and initiatives. Throughout the year, programs at the park are offered in collaboration with civic, arts, cultural and educational organizations.

On Saturday, September 9, for the first time, college students from greater Boston and beyond will be coming together for “Let’s Meet at the Park for College Students,” from 11 a.m. to 12 p.m. for a gathering hosted by anoush’ella.

New this year are the Midday Labyrinth Walks held every Tuesday at 12:15 p.m. Led by Katrina Piehler, health and wellness coach, the weekly program includes a guided meditation walking the labyrinth. Offered in collaboration with the City of Boston, Boston Public Health Commission and the Greenway Conservancy, this weekly program continues until the end of October.

“The labyrinth has been a tool for relaxation for centuries,” said Dr. Darshan Mehta, medical director at the Benson-Henry Institute for Mind Body Medicine at Massachusetts General Hospital. “Walking meditation, supported by the Labyrinth, creates a space to be in the moment. It’s a practice of returning to a sense of balance and grounding, and one’s own inner strength. Walking the Labyrinth is an experience that can be shared across cultures and age groups and offers an opportunity for people to enjoy a common space. Labyrinths have existed in all the world’s cultures including the indigenous cultures of North America, virtually everywhere.”

Tea & Tranquillity, the first Program at the Park offered, is held weekly on Wednesdays at 4pm to meet and greet, walk the Labyrinth and enjoy refreshing ice tea and desserts. “Armenian Heritage Park is about creating the kind of bonds that make communities connect and flourish,” noted Laura Bilazarian Purutyan.

Celebrating What Unites Us!, the monthly series offered in collaboration with the City of Boston Age Strong Commission, is now in its fifth year. Each month the country of origin of many living in the City of Boston and beyond is highlighted. The series builds community, cross cultural understanding and common ground while promoting active, healthy and engaged living. “For the first time, I am meeting people from different parts of the city,” said Rita Pagliuca, also active with the Friends of Armenian Heritage Park.

The Friends is an initiative of the Armenian Heritage Foundation, sponsor of the Park.

On Thursday, September 21, at 2 pm, the Welcome Reception for New Citizens following their Naturalization Ceremony at Faneuil Hall will be held at the Park. Supported by the Park’s Noubar and Anna Afeyan Endowed Fund, the festive celebration features Dan Teager’s 12-piece Black Sea Salsa Band and luncheon, catered by anoush’ella. New citizens are warmly greeted with gifts from Boston’s arts, cultural and civic organizations including Museum of Fine Arts, Boston Symphony Orchestra, Boston Children’s Museum, New England Aquarium, Faneuil Hall Marketplace among others.

“Please join us to welcome the United States’ newest citizens to Boston at the Welcome Reception for New Citizens,” said Armine Afeyan, founding chair, Welcome Reception. “Since its opening in 2012, the Armenian Heritage Park has invited its visitors to interpret the ever-changing Abstract Sculpture, stroll the inner labyrinth or just take a break on a bench in the midst of a busy day. The Park and the experiences it

creates are a gift, a thank-you from the Armenian-American community to those who have welcomed us, whether in the recent or distant past. The Park tells the story of the immigrant experience, highlighting Massa-



2023 Reconfiguration of the Abstract Sculpture (Matt Conti photo)

achusetts’ historical leadership in welcoming new arrivals, including Armenians, to its shores. We have the opportunity to carry forward this welcoming legacy by cele-

brating our newest US citizens during this gathering at the Armenian Heritage Park. Fresh off of their citizenship ceremony at Faneuil Hall, new citizens and their families will make their way over to the Park to be met by food, drink, music and, the most important element of any celebration, an enthusiastic crowd. I hope you will continue the proud Boston tradition of welcoming newcomers with open arms by joining us on this special day.”

On Saturday, September 23, at 11 a.m. and 3 p.m., Jean Appolon Expressions Dance Company will premiere an original dance inspired by the design and key features of Armenian Heritage Park. The rain date is September 24. The dance performances are a part of the Greenway Conservancy’s Momentum Dance Series, presented by Amazon.

Appolon, founder and artistic director of Jean Appolon Expressions (JAE), chose the park to create this original piece.

“This collaboration means a lot to JAE

because our work revolves around connecting different communities and cultures,” he shares. “Armenian Heritage Park is uniquely related to some of our most recent work.” JAE is a contemporary dance company “deeply rooted in Haitian-folkloric culture that celebrates, nurtures, and empowers a global community.” Momentum Dance Series on The Greenway culminates with a Dance Festival on Saturday, October 7. Jean Appolon Expressions will be performing at the Park at 1:30 p.m. on that day. For a complete listing of performances, please visit ArmenianHeritagePark.org/Calendar.

On Sunday, October 1 at 1 p.m., Meghri Dervartanian, Children’s Book author and illustrator, will share the story of her recently published, «Դէպի Արարատ Լեռ» *Toward Mt. Ararat* (2022). Meghri recently returned from Armenia where she and friends “hand-delivered backpacks and school supplies” to many young students. Refreshments are hosted by Eastern Lamejun Bakers.

For a complete listing of programs at the park held throughout the year beginning with the Annual Reconfiguration of the Abstract Sculpture in April, visit ArmenianHeritagePark.org/Calendar. All programs are free and open to the public and are building community, engaging all coming together on common ground.

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FRIDAY, OCTOBER 27, 2023

7:00 – 8:30 PM (Free and open to the public)

Tufts University, Medford, MA
Joyce Cummings Center, Room 270

Complimentary parking. Light Reception to Follow.

90TH ANNIVERSARY GALA
SATURDAY, OCTOBER 28, 2023

Boston Burlington Marriott, Burlington, MA



**KEYNOTE
SPEAKER**

**Robert
Avetisyan**
*Representative of the
Nagorno Karabakh
Republic in the US*



EMCEE

**Sona
Movsesian**
*Author, podcast co-host
and personal assistant to
Conan O'Brien*

MUSICAL PERFORMANCE



a cappella trio



From left: Teni Apelian, Anais Tekerian, Yeraz Markarian

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Cocktail Reception | 6:30 pm
Dinner and Program | 7:30 pm
Seats are \$300 per person



Arts & Culture

Armenian Film Society Announces Program for Inaugural Armenian Film Festival

GLENDALÉ — Armenian Film Society has announced the program for the inaugural Armenian Film Festival in Glendale from September 6-10, at the Alex Theatre, Laemmle Glendale and Hero House.

Founded in 2015 by husband and wife Armen and Mary Karaoghlanian, Armenian Film Society shines a spotlight on Armenian films and filmmakers. The nonprofit organization is hosting its first film festival this year on the occasion of the centennial of Armenian cinema.

“Armenian Film Society has always been about celebrating Armenian filmmakers. 2023 marks 100 years of Armenian cinema, and by hosting our film festival on the centennial, we hope to usher in the next 100 years of Armenian cinema,” said founder, CEO Armen Karaoghlanian.

The opening night film is the premiere of Michael Goorjian’s “Amerikatsi,” at the Alex Theatre on Wednesday, September 6. The closing night film is a special 15th anniversary screening of Sev Ohanian’s debut feature film, “My Big Fat Armenian

(SHANT SEVAG PHOTO)



Family,” also screening at the Alex Theatre, on Sunday, September 10.

The festival will also feature several panels, including a discussion with director Michael Goorjian and producer Arman Nshanian about filming in Armenia, as well as a discussion and book signing event with legendary producer Howard Kazanjian, whose credits include “The Empire Strikes Back,” “Raiders of the Lost Ark” and “Return of the Jedi.”

The Armenian Film Festival will also feature a total of 12 short films, including Garin Hovannisian’s “No-where” and Ophelia Harutyunyan’s “It Takes a Village...,” both of which won top prizes at LA Shorts this year and are now qualified for the Academy Awards, as well as Milena Mooradina’s “Cycles,” a student film that is a semifinalist for a Student Academy Award.

“The Armenian Film Festival is an all-Armenian film festival— that is, every film, every year, will always have an Armenian connection. We want to celebrate our artists, while also making the festival accessible to non-Armenians who can discover our stories,” noted founder and President Mary Karaoghlanian.

Full program and ticket information can be found on Armenian Film Society’s website, <https://www.armenianfilmsociety.com/>



Sergey Kosemyan

Cello on Concert Stage and in Nature

By Artsvi Bakhchinyan

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

YEREVAN/LOS ANGELES — Cellist Sergey Kosemyan, a native of Yerevan, was born into the family of Honored Artist of Armenia, famous violist, member of the Komitas State String Quartet Alexander Kosemyan and violinist Karine Rostombekyan.

Studying in Yerevan and then in Paris, Sergey has received awards and titles at prestigious international competitions. His repertoire includes Western European, Armenian and Russian classics, as well as contemporary pieces.

In 2014, he founded the Art Trio in Torreon (Mexico), in 2017, the Kosemyan Ensemble in Saltillo (Mexico) and in 2023, a piano duo and piano trio with the participation of recognized musicians, members of the Grammy Recording Academy Mikael Ayrapetyan and Philip Vaiman. He took master classes from such world-class musicians as Mstislav Rostropovich, Tibor Varga and Philippe Muller, among others.

Sergey, you were the first cellist to record Bach suites in various outdoor spaces in America, from the Grand Canyon (Arizona) to Sequoia National Park (California). It was supposed to be both a pleasant and difficult experience.

Yes, indeed, this is a very special musical project for me. You see, there is something in common in music and nature — it is a harmonious relationship. Beauty that is accessible to everyone. Working on this project, I want to reveal something new every time in this synthesis of forms, sounds, colors and give it to people. It seems to me that this project can encourage people to attend classical music concerts and strive for art in general.

For a quarter of a century, musicians have been sounding the alarm about the fact that the demand for cello is very low, not only in Armenia, but all over the world. Is that true?

Unfortunately, this is true. This trend continues to this day. In addition to the above-mentioned demand, there is a shortage of professionals who can pass on the professional traditions of the masters of the past to a new generation. The cello is an extremely expensive instrument. Many of the great cellists of the past played collectible instruments belonging to various foundations and private collectors. To reach a professional level, a combination of several factors will be required — firstly, a

continued on next page

Three Composers Honored in Armenia

By Satenik Kaplanyan

YEREVAN — This year the Romanos Melikyan State Music College of Yerevan commemorates its 100th anniversary and the 140th anniversary of Melikyan’s birth. The festivities culminated in the inauguration of a refurbished auditorium at the college on August 24. This auditorium has now been named after three distinguished Armenian composers, Aram Satyan, Konstantin Petrossian, and Levon Chaushyan, who are revered luminaries in the musical world of the Republic of Armenia.

Satyan, an esteemed figure in Armenian art, is not only a composer but also a professor. He completed his education at the Romanos Melikyan State Music College, followed by studies at the Composition Department at Yerevan State Conservatory under the tutelage of Aleksandr Harutyunyan. He pursued post-graduate studies under the guidance of Edvard Mirzoyan and has been the president of the Union of Composers of Armenia since 2013. He has been recognized as Honored Art Worker of the Republic of Armenia.

Petrossian, also an Honored Art Worker of the Republic of Armenia, excels as a composer, pianist, and conductor. He earned his degrees from Yerevan’s Romanos Melikyan State Music College, and Yerevan State Conservatory’s Composition Department, where he studied under Edvard Baghdasaryan and Grigor Yeghiazaryan, respectively. Notably, he directed the Music Center of the Union of Composers of Armenia and serves as the conductor of Boston’s Yerevan Chorale Society and Orchestra since 2008.

Chaushyan, another Honored Art Worker of the Republic of Armenia, is celebrated as a composer and professor. He completed his studies in the composition and piano departments



Levon Chaushyan

at Yerevan Conservatory, and pursued post-graduate studies. He held prominent roles as the vice-president of the Union of Armenian Composers and the founding president of the Armenian Music Assembly.



Konstantin Petrossian, at left, with Aram Satyan



ARTS & CULTURE

from previous page

natural talent, a mentor, hard work and a tool that will help to fully reveal the entire palette of aural colors.

Who are some of your mentors? And what qualities should he have?

It so happened that I studied with masters from different countries. Adopting their experience and techniques, I remember a wonderful teacher and, above all, a good person, Alexander Chaushyan Sr., under whose guidance I began studying the Bach suites that I am performing today in this project. Alexander Chaushyan had a great pedagogical gift. I always attended his lessons with great enthusiasm. Subsequently, in a very short period, I managed to learn a lot from Mstislav Rostropovich, who answered all my professional questions and shared the secrets of the technical and musical aspects of cello performance. I was also lucky to know and communicate closely with such outstanding artists as Geronti Talalyan, Robert Amirkhanyan, Stepan Shakaryan, Medea Abrahamyan and Edvard Mirzoyan. The *Sonata for Cello and Piano* by Edvard Mirzoyan, which is dedicated to Rostropovich, was first performed by me in Paris, after which this sonata became a mandatory work at the Pierre Lantier International Competition. Later, when I was in Yerevan, visiting Edvard Mikhailovich Mirzoyan, when I received from him as a gift the notes of this sonata with the author's personal autograph.

Please tell us about your most memorable performance and how you came up with the idea to record in nature?

In 2015, the cello was performed for the first time in the ancient Sanahin Temple in



Armenia. I recorded Bach's music and the idea of this project was born from there. And after arriving in the US, I began to implement this plan. As for the concert. I have performed a lot on different stages of the world and with different orchestras as a soloist, but the most memorable concert took place again in 2015 in Yerevan, where together with the outstanding musician, pianist, organist and composer Hovhannes Manukyan, by the way, who dedicated his compositions to me. For the first time in Armenia, we performed all 5 Beethoven sonatas for cello and piano in one concert. The concert lasted about three hours and

left unimaginable impressions that will be repeated in the United States in the near future.

We have heard your cello playing in Rudolf Kharatyan's outstanding ballet, "Two Suns," staged in Yerevan in 2015 and subsequently repeatedly broadcast by the prestigious Mezzo TV channel. It was an unprecedented event in the history of Armenian music and stage choreography.

You are right. This was really an extraordinary event for Armenian art. In addition to the extremely interesting list of Armenian

composers — Mesrop Mashtots, Grigor Narekatsi, Khachaturian, Hovanes, Babajanian, Terteryan and Ariyan — whose works are performed in the ballet, showing the rich history of Armenian music, we see that for the first time this production is broadcast to more than 80 countries of the world to an audience of 60 million people. This ballet is regularly broadcast around the world from 2021 to the present, where the soloist of the Washington Ballet Jonathan Jordan dances a separate number dedicated to the cello. This music was composed by the outstanding Armenian-Canadian composer Ashot Ariyan. I recorded this number specially for the production of this ballet under the direction of the world-famous choreographer Rudolf Kharatyan. This is a great event for the whole of Armenia and I am extremely glad to be a part of this project.

Armenian composers have dedicated works for cello to you. By performing them, do you allow for some freedom in interpretation?

For me, personal interpretation is always inextricably linked with the composer's idea. I try to stick to the golden mean, showing performing creativity that holds the hand of the composers' ideas. I often discuss with composers their vision and offer my interpretation of the work. We always manage to find mutual understanding.

Please tell us about upcoming projects.

I have plans in 2024 to tour Mexico, where the works of Armenian composers will be performed for the first time, as well as a tour of US cities with the same program. A tour of Europe is also being discussed now. But it will already be in the 2025-2026 season.

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ARTS & CULTURE

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CALIFORNIA

OCTOBER 14 — The Orange County Trex Fraternity presents Kef Time So-Cal at Bagramian Hall Mezza 900 W. Lincoln Avenue, Montebello. Featuring Hagopian Kef Time Legacy Band. Saturday, 6 p.m. to 1a.m. **ORDER TICKETS ONLINE:** orange-county-trex-fraternity.ticketleap.com Adults \$85. Students, College Age & Younger \$65. Table Sponsor \$800. For More Information Contact: Ralph Dergazarian 714.681.3013 • Brian Melkesian 626.827.8434 Chuck Simonian 559.799.3949 • Ari Gulugian 949.701.8006

MASSACHUSETTS

SEPTEMBER 3 — St. Mark Armenian Church's Annual Armenian Festival will be held on the church grounds on Sunday, from 12pm to 6pm, 2427 Wilbraham Road, Springfield. Hot dinners feature St. Mark's signature Losh Kebab (made of ground beef, lamb and a variety of herbs) and Chicken Kebab, along with Porov Kuffteh, which was added to the menu last year and is an Armenian-style meatball made of ground lamb and beef. Attendees can enjoy an array of ethnic baked goods and sweets, and Soorj, Armenian coffee, will also be available. There will also be a cultural booth with handmade Armenian jewelry and other items made in Armenia, and a raffle. All proceeds from the Fest benefit the ministries of St. Mark Armenian Church. stmarkarmenianchurch.org, or call (413) 783-5793. Admission to the festival and parking are free. The event will be held rain or shine (there will be plenty of seating under tents).

ARMENIAN HERITAGE PARK WEEKLY THROUGH OCTOBER 24 AT 12:15PM MIDDAY LABYRINTH WALKS AT THE PARK. Armenian Heritage Park on The Greenway, Boston Tuesdays for all who work and live in the city and beyond, an opportunity for connection and wellbeing. Offered in collaboration with Boston Public Health Commission and The Greenway Conservancy. Weekly through October 25 at 4pm

SEPTEMBER 9 — Saturday, at 11am, **LET'S MEET AT THE PARK! FOR COLLEGE STUDENTS IN BOSTON & BEYOND.** Meet & Greet. Eat & Enjoy. Welcome at 11am. Walk the Labyrinth. Write a Wish on a ribbon for The Wishing Tree. To receive the e-invite, please email first and last name of the student(s), college each attending, year graduating and email to hello@ArmenianHeritagePark.org. We ask they invite their roommate(s) to join us, too. Hosted by anoush'ella.

SEPTEMBER 21 — Thursday **WELCOME RECEPTION FOR NEW CITIZENS** following their Naturalization Ceremony at Faneuil Hall Supported by the Noubar and Anna Afeyan Endowed Fund for Public Program. For details, email hello@ArmenianHeritagePark.org

SEPTEMBER 23 — **JEAN APPOLON EXPRESSIONS: DANCE PERFORMANCE AT THE PARK,** Momentum Greenway Dance Program, presented by Amazon, 11:00am and 3:00pm. Rain date: September 24 Inspired by the Park's design and key features, ArWsWc Director Jean Appolon selected the Park to create this original piece.

OCTOBER 7 — **MOMENTUM GREENWAY DANCE PROGRAM** presented by Amazon, Four dance companies perform on The Greenway including at Armenian Heritage Park. 11:00am ConWnuum Dance Project at AunWe Kay & Uncle Frank Chin Park. 12:30pm Vimoksha Dance Company at Rows Wharf Plaza, 1:30pm Jean Appolon Expressions at Armenian Heritage Park, 2:30pm Public Displays of Motion at Carolyn Lynch Garden

NOVEMBER 12 — Sunday at 2pm **GIVING THANKS! TOGETHER IN CELEBRATION** Meet & Greet. Walk the Labyrinth. Tie a Ribbon on the Wishing Tree. Share the Warmth: ABCD Winter Drive

DECEMBER 10 — **CANDLELIT LABYRINTH WALK: IN PEACE & HARMONY** "Boston's Newest Holiday TradiWon" Walk the Candlelit Labyrinth. Meet & Greet. Hot Chocolate & Luscious Cookies. Share the Warmth: ABCD Winter Drive

SEPTEMBER 11 — Saint James Men's Club and Holy Trinity Men's Union will have a joint meeting on Monday, at the Holy Trinity Center, 145 Brattle Street, Cambridge. Guest Speaker will be Matt Slater of the New England Patriots. Mezza at 5:45, dinner at 6:45, Kheyma or losh dinner \$20.00. Will appreciate R.S.V.P. to the church office 617-354-0632.

SEPTEMBER 14 — Starting September 14, the Zangér Boston Youth Chorale resuming its rehearsals, 6-7.30 p.m. Accepting new students ages 6 to 17 for 2023-2024 season. Artistic Director Artur Veranian. Rehearsals on Thursdays, in the Function Hall of the Armenian Memorial Church, 32 Bigelow Ave., Watertown. For further information and registration please contact: Ms. Izabella Djevalikian: 781-839-0845, bellasahakian@yahoo.com

SEPTEMBER 29 — Save the date! City of Smile-USA will host "A Tribute to Coco Chanel Who Loved Pearls." Friday, 11.30 a.m., Oakley Country Club, Watertown. Pearl jewelry raffle fundraiser and shopping the world's largest collection of pearl jewelry designs at incredible direct-from-producer savings. City of Smile-USA is dedicated to treating the children of Armenia who have cancer.

OCTOBER 1 — At 1 p.m., Meghri Dervartanian, children's author and book illustrator will speak about her recently published book in Armenian, *Depi Ararat Ler (Toward Mt. Ararat)*. Sunday. Refreshments hosted by Eastern Lamejun Bakers. For all ages.

OCTOBER 14 — The Armenian Friends of America, Inc., presents Hye Kef 5, a five-hour dance featuring Harry Bedrossian, John Berberian, Leon Janikian, Bob Raphaelian and Jason Naroian. Saturday, 6.30 p.m. to midnight, The Armenian Church at Hye Pointe, 1280 Boston Road, Haverhill. AFA rooms available at Double Tree by Hildong, Andover. Ask for AFA room rates. Ticket prices \$50 for the dance and mezza platters. Coffee and dessert to follow. Cash bar. Tables of 8, \$385. Advance tickets only. No tickets will be sold at the door. Ticket sales final. Online at armenianfriendsofamerica.org or call Lu Sirmaian 978-314-1956 or Mary Ann Janjigian 603-770-3375. Proceeds to benefit The Armenian Churches of Merrimack Valley.

OCTOBER 27-28 — Mark your calendars. Celebrating the 90th anniversary of the Armenian Mirror-Spectator with two spectacular events. First, a panel discussion on Friday, October 27, with renowned journalists including David Ignatius from the Washington Post, Ken Dilanian from NBC News, and Eric Hacopian from CivilNet, at Tufts University. Second, a spectacular gala benefit on Saturday, October 28. The gala, at the Burlington Marriott, will be MC-ed by the irrepressible Sona Movsesian, who calls herself the Worst Assistant in the World, in her capacity as assistant to the one and only Conan O'Brien, and feature as keynote Speaker Artsakh's Representative to the US Robert Avetisyan.

NEW YORK

SEPTEMBER 20 — Special concert at St. Vartan Armenian Cathedral, 630 2nd Ave., 8 p.m., in honor of Armenian Independence Day with pianist Karine Poghosyan and Maestro Jason Tramm conducting MidAtlantic Philharmonic Orchestra with music of Khachaturian and Rachmaninoff.

SEPTEMBER 24 — St. Gregory the Enlightener Church Picnic Annual Picnic & "Fall Family Fair" at St. Gregory Armenian Church in White Plains, from noon until 5:00 p.m. Featuring Armenian music, Raffles and Fun Activities for the children. Traditional Armenian Food and Wine. Admission and parking are free. "North Street" Exit 25 on Hutchinson River Parkway, 1131 North St, White Plains, N.Y. Phone: 914-428-2595 or saintgregorychurch-wp@gmail.com

NOVEMBER 4 — **SAVE THE DATE! 12 Vocations: The Ongoing Promise of St. Nersess Seminary.** Help us celebrate the vocations of the next 12 priests and lay ministers who studied at St. Nersess and St. Vladimir's Seminaries. Details, invitations, and booklet donations can be found on www.stnersess.edu.

Send Calendar Items to the Mirror-Spectator: To send calendar items to the Mirror-Spectator, email alin@mirrorspectator.com or alin.gregorian@gmail.com. You can also visit our website, www.mirrorspectator.com, and find the "calendar" section under the heading "More." You can also mail them to the Armenian Mirror-Spectator, 755 Mount Auburn St., Watertown, MA 02472. All calendar entries must be received by noon on Monday before publication. There is no fee for calendar entries.

Forbidden Homeland: Story of a Diasporan with Katia Tavitian Karaguezian

FRESNO — Author Katia Tavitian Karaguezian will speak on her new book "Forbidden Homeland: Story of a Diasporan" on Friday, September 8, at 7 p.m., in the University Business Center, Alice Peters Auditorium, on the Fresno State campus. The event is part of the Armenian Studies Program Fall 2023 Lecture Series.

In 1988, a single innocent comment made at her college in southern California led Katia, a new immigrant, to the discovery of long-lost relatives, descendants of her grandmother's siblings from whom she was separated because of the Genocide. As Katia decided to find answers to questions she had struggled with all her life, she un-

covered stunning family secrets that ultimately lead to a decades-long search for something even bigger than her own identity.

"*Forbidden Homeland* immerses you in centuries of world-shaping history as its written pages become the rich landscape of a deeply personal journey...making you feel a part of it and reaching into your core.



Katia Tavitian Karaguezian

... In her riveting odyssey to find the missing pieces of her own identity, Karaguezian takes the reader with her to uncover hidden truths and connect past with present. She masterfully weaves her life's unexpected twists and turns, layered within stories of Armenian Genocide, Lebanese Civil War, immigration, and current world events, and paints a vivid, living mosaic of the unique and shared experiences of exile and resilience, loss and rebirth, discovering finally that even when forbidden our homeland, if we search, we will find home," said Ani Hovannisian Kevorkian, who made the documentary, "The Hidden Map."

Karaguezian (Pharm.D.) was born in

Beirut, Lebanon. In 1984, she immigrated to California with her family. In 1992, she received her doctorate in pharmacy from the University of Southern California. She currently practices as a pharmacist specializing in pediatric care. Parallel to her career in pharmacy, when not spending time with family, Karaguezian paints, reads about history and politics, or volunteers with several non-profit organizations. Karaguezian attributes her love of writing and reading to her childhood years growing up in war-torn Lebanon, where she often found refuge in books.

The presentation will also be live-streamed on YouTube at: <https://bit.ly/armenianstudiesyoutube>.

Recipe Corner



by Christine Vartanian



In the Kitchen with Jon Koobatian: Cucumber and Kalamata Appetizer

FRESNO — Throwing a party any time soon? Chef Jon Koobatian has just the right appetizer recipe. “I recently created this recipe for one of my wife’s get-togethers with her friends, and it was a complete hit. It’s easy to make and assemble, and is perfect as an appetizer on a mezze table for special events, buffets, or to serve at the holidays...”



Jon was the owner and head chef at the acclaimed Jon’s Bear Club in Reedley, California for several decades before he retired. Born in Dinuba, a small farming town in the San Joaquin Valley, Jon’s history with The Bear Club started many years earlier. He learned his trade on the job, working first as a prep cook and sous chef at major Lake Tahoe-area restaurants before returning to the Reedley area. He then worked at the celebrated Vallis’ Restaurant in Kingsburg, the Redwood Inn of Sultana, Dinuba Ranch, and the Swedish Mill, and became The Bear Club’s executive chef in 1973. And the rest is history.

Through the 1970s and mid-1980s, Jon’s restaurant established itself as a fine

steakhouse featuring exceptional food and friendly customer service. “Using the freshest local ingredients available each season was always appreciated by our guests,” says Jon, “and one of the top reasons they chose to return again and again.” Under his direction, the restaurant became a treasured part of the local community and home to countless family meals and special celebrations that welcomed generation after generation of San Joaquin Valley residents.

“We had infants brought into the restaurant by their parents, who grew up and came back and worked for us,” Jon says. “After having been there 40 plus years, you see generations come and go.”

His must-read cookbook, *Cooking with Jon*, is a legacy of Jon’s vast culinary experiences, his many years in the local restaurant business, family traditions, fond memories, and personal recollections. Also included are brilliant photos to go with the recipes – photos that make you feel like you could just reach down and pick up the delicious food. Some of the recipes included are: Charred Asparagus Roll-Ups, New York Steak, Lobster Bisque, Tortilla Crusted Salmon, Cabbage Dolma with Beef and Lamb, Chicken George, Jon’s Grandma Bazarian’s famous Armenian Shish Kebab, and how to make your own kettle corn at home.

Cucumber and Kalamata Appetizer

INGREDIENTS:

- 1 medium English cucumber, washed and diced
- 1/2 cup chopped Kalamata olives, or a little more
- 1/2 cup minced yellow or green onions, or a little more
- Chopped flat-leaf parsley
- Lemon juice, olive oil, fresh lemon zest, to taste
- Kosher salt and coarse black pepper
- Flat bread, crackers, crostini, lahvosh or pita chips
- Fresh vegetables
- 1 cup dried diced figs
- 1-2 cups store-bought hummus, or a little more
- 1 cup Feta cheese, crumbled

Steps:

For the Kalamata olive tapenade: Jon combines the chopped Kalamata olives with the onions, parsley, lemon juice, olive oil, lemon zest, and salt and pepper. Check seasonings, cover, and chill for 1-2 hours (or overnight) before using.

For the sherry-honey figs: Jon dices dried figs and rehydrates them in a bowl with a couple of tablespoons of cream sherry and honey, then lets them sit on the counter for a couple of hours. The figs will absorb all the moisture.

For whipped Feta cheese: Jon adds a few tablespoons of heavy cream and cream cheese to 1 cup of crumbled Feta cheese, and whisks them together for a minute until they are light and fluffy.

PREPARATION:

To serve, spread the hummus as the base on a platter, and top with the cucumbers and Kalamata olive tapenade.

Place the sherry-honey figs on the top, and finish with the whipped Feta cheese mixture. Drizzle with olive oil and sprinkle with pepper and more lemon zest, if desired. Serve with fresh chilled vegetables, flat bread, crackers, crostini, lahvosh or pita chips.

Contact Jon at: chefjonkoobation@gmail.com to order his book and for a personally signed copy. His book is available for sale at The Market Grocery Store and at Sam’s Deli & Cucina in Fresno, California.

Jon Koobatian was the recipient of the 2017 Lifetime Achievement Award in the California Restaurant Association’s “Best of the Valley” awards. The Lifetime Achievement Award is one part of a much larger event: year after year, the Best of the Valley Restaurant Awards recognize the Fresno area’s restaurants for excellence in each of dozens of categories, highlighting the large variety of available food and culinary arts in this region. The nominees are chosen by the most discriminating audience: their fellow restaurateurs. “Cooking has been my passion in life. It has filled my entire life with joy,” shares Jon in the cookbook.

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Zangér Boston Youth Chorale Seeks New Singers

WATERTOWN — The Zangér Boston Youth Chorale has just announced its rehearsal schedule for the 2023-2024 season. Chorus members are coming together after the summer vacation to begin preparations for Christmas Concerts, as well as additional programs and appearances to be announced shortly.

Zangér Chorale was founded in February 2023 by Armenian Culture Connection, under the direction of conductor Artur Veranian, an internationally acclaimed cho-

ral conductor and teacher. He trained and educated many singers and choir conductors, and had an enormous influence on a whole generation of musicians. The innovative vocal technique he implemented has been acknowledged and celebrated for its uniqueness; he is a recipient of many international awards and prizes at European competitions in Germany, Italy, Spain, Russia, Poland, Hungary, Yugoslavia, Latvia, Estonia, Ukraine and Armenia. To share and preserve Maestro’s legacy and his con-

tribution to the choral art, a documentary film is being produced in Armenia and is scheduled to be released in December 2023.

With the newly formed Zangér Boston Youth Chorale, Veranian is bringing back a tradition of professional vocal art, much missed after the devastating pandemic years. Only a few months into rehearsals, the chorus was invited to perform at two major community events: on May 19 at ACEC on “Armenian Independence Day Celebration” organized by ARF, and on

May 21 performed as a special guest at “Our Young Talents” Concert in Watertown. The latter was aired on the Watertown Cable TV.

Zangér is currently accepting new singers ages 6 to 17. No prior experience necessary.

Rehearsals are held on Thursdays, 6 to 7.30 p.m. : in the Function Hall of the Armenian Memorial Church, 32 Bigelow Ave., Watertown.

For further information and registration please contact: Izabella Djevalikian at bel-lasahakian@yahoo.com

'Worst Assistant in the World' Sona Movsesian Set to Be Best MC

MOVSESIAN, from page 1

(Movsesian is going to be the MC for the *Mirror-Spectator's* 90th-anniversary gala. More below.)

The contrast in styles makes for a particularly delicious aural recipe. O'Brien and Movsesian always come across as bickering siblings who secretly adore each other.

Said Movsesian, "When I first started working for him [O'Brien], I was kind of buttoned up. I was working for a TV legend. I really wanted to make him proud. Now, it's 14 years later. To give you an example of our relationship change, he is the godfather of my twin boys," she said. "We've become much closer. We're like family. I also don't assist him as much as I used to. I'm much more of a podcast co-host. He is like a surrogate brother to me. I send him videos and photos of my kids all the time. I think it's safe to say our relationship has evolved from a boss-assistant relationship to that of a brother-sister, a more familial relationship."

A running joke on the podcast is that one of Movsesian's twin children, Charlie, did not laugh at a joke and

"They have a very special bromance, Tak and Conan. They have a very special bond and I don't want to mess with it," she added.

Movsesian is proud to call herself the world's worst assistant, and exude a slacker image, though of course, that is far from the truth. Her cool contrasts well with the more expressive and cerebral O'Brien.

Another contrast between them is that Movsesian's love of trash TV such as the ultra-icky reality shows "Bad Girls Club" and "Gigolos," much to the chagrin of O'Brien, who is a devotee of history books especially pertaining to the Civil War. "I love guilty pleasure TV. Most people would not tell their boss who is a comedy icon that they like those things but I am unapologetic about it."

The first time O'Brien fans saw Movsesian on his TBS show was in a taped segment in which Conan comes to Movsesian's desk after she fired off a company-wide email complaining that someone swiped her "Gigolos" mug. ("Gigolos" ran for six seasons on Showtime and was about a group of men in Las Vegas who were, well,



Sona Movsesian and Conan O'Brien

Conan is demanding an apology from him. Charlie, 2 now, committed the unforgivable deed when he was 6 months old.

With her booming laugh, she said, "He [Conan] is not going to forgive him forever. When you are a comedian and you are giving your best material to a six-month old and he doesn't give you what you need, you are going to remember it forever." She added, "Charlie is kind of done in Conan's book."

When interviewed by the *Mirror-Spectator* in 2016 and 2020, life was very different for Movsesian. The pandemic had yet to happen and her twin sons, Mikey and Charlie, were not in the picture.

And just how is motherhood for this ultra-chill woman?

"It's a lot. They just started school. They were both bawling and sobbing, which is really not fun. It has changed my priorities a lot," she said.

She added that now work is not the central focus of her life.

"[Before the babies work] dictated what I did day to day, I gave a lot of myself to it and I was always available when we needed to travel," she said. "Having kids changed all that. I am more interested in whether my boys are pooping than whether Conan gets to an event on time."

She added, "Conan was, for a very long time, the person I prioritized because that's what you do when you are an assistant.

"First my husband came along and Conan fell down the ranks with that and when these two guys came along, everything else just took a back seat to them. Conan has to compete with two toddlers for attention now," she said.

Her husband, Tak Boroyan, and O'Brien have developed a close friendship separate from Movsesian's relationship with O'Brien.

gentlemen of the night.)

"I sent that email because I was so fed up. An hour later he showed up at my desk. That's one of the things that shows the spontaneity of it. Conan was able to make an entire segment of it based on me not finding my mug," she said.

The skit is both ridiculous and ridiculously clever as O'Brien goes from desk to desk asking about the mug and realizing that many on his staff like drinking on the job. His completely serious face and unexpected questions contrast with the reactions of his staff, including Movsesian, who seem like students caught red-handed by the teacher.

Podcast Star

Movsesian was modest about how popular her podcast is.

She explained: "You have no idea who's listening, you have no idea where they are when they are listening. There are times when we do a live show, like the Beacon Theater in New York or the Wiltern in LA and there are thousands of people watching. And that's when you get an idea of how popular it is."

The hosts have done a handful of live episodes in theaters. "They are so outside my comfort zone. There is a moment when I feel my soul leaves my body and I am just looking at myself and asking what are you doing talking to Stephen Colbert in front of 3,000 people?"

And the fact that people know her blows her mind, too, she noted. "Sometimes I will walk around and some random person will ask me how Mikey and Charlie are doing."

The podcast has topnotch guests whom O'Brien interviews, such as Sir Paul McCartney, Bryan Cranston and Kelly Clarkson, with liberal doses of comments by

Movsesian and Gourley. Another type of show the crew does now is a weekly segment when O'Brien will talk to a fan. "The fans can be all over the world and when they talk about how much they listen to the podcast and how much they love us, I understand how big the scope is. But if I sat down and thought about the fact that millions of people listen to the idiocy we create in the studio every day, it would get in my head. I just try not to think about it. I don't want to let that pollute my brain."

She gave full credit for the success of the podcast to O'Brien. "The podcast is popular because of Conan. Bar none, it's him. What people are noticing is how quick he is, how funny he is. It's all unscripted. Everything he says, the comedy bits, it's all off the top of his head, in the moment. Even after 14 years, watching him come up with the stuff that he comes up with, I'm like how does your Brian work like that? How does that happen? It's really incredible to watch."

She added, I'm very lucky to be a supporting character in it. My job is not to do a lot of heavy lifting. He does all the heavy lifting and he can make anyone around him charming and funny.

Movsesian exudes the kind of happy-in-her-own-skin attitude that most people can only dream about even when O'Brien has on Michelle Obama or Harrison Ford. To her, they are just normal folks.

"I don't know why I don't get more clammed up when I meet people like Michelle Obama," she said. "Certain people do a very good job of making you feel at ease and reminding you that they are just a human being and as much as they have accomplished in life, they are just a human being."

"They are all just human beings and they would prefer the people around them treat them normally," Movsesian explained.

That sangfroid, however, was tested a handful of times: with basketball standouts Magic Johnson and the late Kobe Bryant, guitarist Slash of Guns 'n Roses, who was her first crush, and two US presidents.

"Certain people have held a place not just in my life but in the life of my family. My family immigrated here [from Turkey] and one of the things they really connected with was Lakers basketball. So meeting legends that were part of that team was not only just a big deal for me but for my family," she explained.

Another group that made her somewhat starstruck included presidents Bill Clinton and Jimmy Carter.

"When I met Jimmy Carter, I remember I just started crying. It has something to do with the knowledge that my family immigrated here. It all ties back to where I come from. Meeting a president as a granddaughter of Genocide survivors and daughter of immigrants and getting to

continued on next page



ARTS & CULTURE

from previous page

have these moments that I meet people very important to our lives here, it really hits me.”

History of Trust

One of the reasons O’Brien and Movsesian get along so well is the implicit trust O’Brien has in her, as she was there and had his back when his world crumbled around him.

“When I first started working for Conan [in 2009], not only was he about to start one of the most storied franchises in late night history [“The Tonight Show”] — probably the most storied — but he was moving his entire staff and family cross country,” she said.

Less than a year later, in 2010, the whole thing imploded in a debacle when O’Brien felt he had no choice but to leave “The Tonight Show” on NBC because its former host, Jay Leno, who had retired from the show, decided he wanted back in. O’Brien has spoken about the toll the episode took on him. To take his mind off it, he embarked on a standup tour of the US, which was successful beyond his expectations. Movsesian was with him every step of the way.

“We go on this multicity national tour for two months. I think we would have gotten to the point that we are in our relationship, but that kind of sped it up. Very early on, I became someone he could talk to and bounce ideas off of,” she explained.

In addition, the “Tonight Show” saga was fodder for gossip columns and the paparazzi who were throwing everything at the people involved for morsels. Movsesian never broke rank at this difficult time and in fact made life easier for O’Brien by taking him to and from work in her old car, thus eluding the photographers who were expecting the host to emerge in a high-end car.

In addition, she noted, she loves his sense of humor. “If you listen to the podcast you know I love to laugh. And I don’t think there is anything more valuable to a comedian than someone around them who loves laughing. I love laughing and he loves to make people laugh.”

Shortly after the drama, he ended up on TBS with a new talk show, “Conan,” which he ended in 2021.

Traveling to Armenia

O’Brien often does travel shows too, taking his camera crew around the world, from Cuba to Ghana, and Mexico to Israel, with one of the best episodes in Armenia in 2015.

Watching the lanky O’Brien (try to) dance in full Armenian traditional garb in front of Garni temple or learn-



Sona Movsesian and her husband Tak Boroyan

ing the Armenian affectionate expression which literally translates into “let me eat your liver,” is priceless. Along the way they visit a matchmaker to find a husband for the then-single Movsesian, as her grandmother had requested right before the group left Los Angeles, and get O’Brien a bit part in an Armenian soap.

“I think that of all the things I’ve done with Conan, that’s what I am most proud of. There are still moments where it’s surreal to think I went for my very first trip to Armenia with Conan O’Brien who is a late night host I used to watch when I was younger. Fast forward how many years and not only am I working for him but he is taking me to Armenia for the first time. When my time with Conan ends, whenever that is, probably when he does, I am going to look back on my career and without hesitation that’s going to be the thing I am going to be most proud of,” she said.

The show led to many positive and permanent changes in Movsesian’s life.

She explained: “Something that not many people know is that after that episode, I was inundated with Facebook friend requests from people who had watched it. Six months later I went to Comicon [comic book convention] and met my husband. He was one of the Facebook friend requests that had been sent to me months earlier. When I accepted, he and I started talking. So in a way that episode is responsible not only for my marriage but for my family.”

In addition, her grandmother passed away a few months after that episode. “It’s a beautiful reminder of my life at that moment. I still am so grateful that Conan wanted to go and that he made an episode that not only Armenians can be proud of but non-Armenians can watch.”

Movsesian has not been back to Armenia since then, but she said she is “desperate to” return, especially since her husband, Tak, is from Armenia.

Tak and his family moved to the US when he was 11. “When [the twins] are old enough, definitely it’s a trip I want to take with my family,” she said. “I’m really looking forward to going back without cameras following me.”

Book

Movsesian’s first book, *The World’s Worst Assistant*, got very good reviews and made it to the *New York Times* best seller list. She also was featured in the *New York Times*.

“I don’t look at myself as a writer. I didn’t know how to write a book,” she said, adding that one of her friends had encouraged her to do.

“It was the perfect time to write it. I got pregnant and had my kids, which is essentially the end of my time assisting Conan,” she said.

Her message in the book is to enjoy what you do and don’t give yourself over completely to it, all with some humorous content.

She explained, “There is this contingent of people like me that want to make a paycheck that sustains their lifestyle but also doesn’t want to fully give in to making work the most important aspect of their life.”

She is still pleasantly surprised by the book’s success.

I never thought I would become a *NYT* bestseller. “They called and told me and it was a very surreal moment,” she recalled. “It’s a better reception than I would get.”

For now, she is loving her work and life situation. “My husband is my soulmate on a personal level, but Conan is my soulmate on a professional level. I want to ride this Irish wave until he dies, because he is probably going to work until he is 95,” she joked.

To hear “Conan O’Brien Needs a Friend” and its sister programs, log onto <https://www.earwolf.com/show/conan-obrien/> or visit any major platform, including iTunes and Spotify.

(Movsesian will be the master of ceremonies for the 90th anniversary gala of the *Armenian Mirror-Spectator*, on October 28, at the Boston Marriott Burlington Hotel. For more information or to support about the gala, visit <https://givebutter.com/UMfCbB>.)

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EDITOR

Alin K. Gregorian

MANAGING EDITOR

Aram Arkun

ART DIRECTOR

Mark (Mgrditchian) McKertich

STAFF WRITER

Harry Kezelian III

CONTRIBUTORS

Christopher Atamian, Artsvi Bakhchinyan, Florence Avakian, Christine Vartanian Datian, Dr. Arshavir Gundjian, Philippe Raffi Kalfayan, Ken Martin, Gerald Papasian, Benjamin Poghosyan, Suren Sargsyan, Harut Sassounian, Hagop Vartivarian

REGIONAL

CORRESPONDENTS

LOS ANGELES: Ani Duzdabanyan-Manoukian, Kevork Keushkerian, Michelle Mkhlian

YEREVAN: Raffi Elliott

BERLIN: Muriel Mirak-Weissbach

PARIS: Jean Eckian

SAN FRANCISCO: Kim Bardakian

CAIRO: Maydaa Nadar

PHOTOGRAPHERS

Jirair Hovsepian, Ken Martin

VIDEO CORRESPONDENT

Haykaram Nahapetyan

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FAX: 617-924-2887

www.mirrorspectator.com

E-Mail: editor@mirrorspectator.com

For advertising: mirrorads@aol.com

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A Devil in Every Detail: The Impossibility of the Integration of Artsakh into Azerbaijan

By Vahan Zanoian

International and pan-Armenian attention is currently understandably focused on opening the Lachin Corridor, since that constitutes the immediate and most visible mitigation of an unsustainable situation for the population of Nagorno Karabakh. Nevertheless, it would be a dangerous mistake to view the current crisis in Nagorno Karabakh merely as a humanitarian crisis. The damage done by the blocking of the Lachin Corridor by Azerbaijan goes beyond the shortages of food and medicine and other necessities. An equally dangerous consequence of the blockade has been a shift in the focus of international attention from the right for self-determination, autonomy, and independence of the ethnic population of Nagorno Karabakh, to humanitarian assistance. This, and the concurrent shift of emphasis in the international narrative around Nagorno Karabakh, has created the risk that international mediators, once they “solve” the humanitarian problem, will consider the conflict resolved and their job done.

What makes this risk real and present is the fact that the international mediators have not yet shown the political will to tackle the difficult challenge and root cause of the blockade, namely, Azerbaijan’s clearly demonstrated intent for ethnic cleansing and Genocide. There seems to be a rush, perhaps even a competition, among international mediators to achieve (and then claim credit for) peace between Armenia and Azerbaijan, at any cost, including turning the fate of the Armenians of Nagorno Karabakh collateral damage in the process.

Charles Michel, the president of the EU, in his briefing after the trilateral meetings in Brussels in mid-July, was deliberate in his exaggerated optimism about the prospects for peace between Armenia and Azerbaijan; two points in his briefing were telling: First, that the two sides had accepted each other’s territorial integrity with specific square kilometers cited as the area of each country, in effect confirming Armenia’s recognition of Nagorno Karabakh, as well as 8 Soviet era Azerbaijani enclaves in Armenia proper, as part of Azerbaijan; and second, his praise of Azerbaijan’s willingness to provide humanitarian supplies to Nagorno Karabakh through Aghdam. These two points are significant because they show total disregard for the basic rights of the population of Nagorno Karabakh.

In early July, the US Ambassador to Armenia, Kristina Kvien, was unambiguous in her statement to the effect that Armenians of Nagorno Karabakh can live in peace as citizens of Azerbaijan. Of course, the Government of Armenia itself has formally and publicly accepted that Nagorno Karabakh is part of the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan. And Russia is not far behind, supporting the notion that the Armenians of Nagorno Karabakh have to accept Azerbaijani rule.

Accepting that Nagorno Karabakh is part of Azerbaijan and that the Armenian population there can be integrated in and live comfortably as citizens of Azerbaijan, has many unimaginable consequences that make the premise simply impossible. Those who advocate this as a way forward have not thought through these consequences.

This paper will not dwell on the “territorial integrity” versus “self-determination” debate, nor will it delve into the complicated history of the Nagorno Karabakh conflict, nor on the lack of any legal basis for Nagorno Karabakh to be part of Azerbaijan. Instead, it will highlight some of the practical obstacles of integrating Nagorno Karabakh in the Republic of Azerbaijan, a subject generally absent from the international discourse on the region.

At the risk of repeating a tired but true cliché, let me say that in this case for sure the devil is in the details. Some of those details include, but are not limited to, the following obvious facts:

—Every able-bodied male above 18 years of age has probably served in the Nagorno Karabakh Defense Army. According to the regime in Baku, these are terrorists. Thousands of soldiers who defended their homeland during past Karabakh wars will be accused of terrorism and arrested, like the recent case of Vagif Khachatryan, who was abducted from a Red Cross vehicle transporting him for medical treatment, because the Azerbaijan government mistook him for his namesake, a former soldier in the Nagorno Karabakh Defense Army. Aliyev’s recent promise of amnesty to Nagorno Karabakh government officials if they resigned and dissolved the government, aside from being an utterly degrading offer for the indigenous population of Nagorno Karabakh, does not inspire much hope that thousands of soldiers in the Nagorno Karabakh Defense Army will be spared. Even

if the Azerbaijan government formulates some kind of nominal umbrella “pardon,” it will find enough loopholes for especially “grievous” cases to arrest and try thousands of military personnel.

—As citizens of Azerbaijan, the Armenian men who somehow do not get imprisoned or executed, and the new generation coming of age, will be required to serve in Azerbaijan’s army. These will be the young men whose older brothers and fathers fought in the Nagorno Karabakh Defense Army, who now would be forced to join the very army their elders fought against. Let that sink in for a minute. And even if we imagine that some of them somehow manage to overcome this impregnable psychological barrier and do join the Azerbaijani army, what will be waiting for them in their military units? If the treatment by Azerbaijan of Armenian POWs is any indication, neither the safety nor the life of Armenian conscripts in the Azerbaijani army can be guaranteed. Granted, conscripts are not POWs; however, given that they or their family members have fought against the Azerbaijani army in the past, and given the widespread and deep-rooted xenophobia against Armenians in the Azerbaijani army, they might as well be.

—The military pantheon in Stepanakert, where the soldiers who died defending Nagorno Karabakh against Azerbaijan are buried and revered as national heroes, will be desecrated and eventually erased entirely. The Armenian population, after acquiring Azerbaijani citizenship, is thus expected to simply forget their heroes and accept the erasure of their graves. This is bound to happen, as destroying graves and entire cemeteries is a well-established Azerbaijani practice. The ethnic cleansing of Nakhijevan did not stop until every trace of past Armenian life and heritage was systematically erased.

—Even if we assume that the Armenian population of Nagorno Karabakh, or a segment of it, somehow manages to accept all of the above, they are bound to be second-class citizens in “their” new country. This does not have to be formal, as it was in the Ottoman empire, where Christians were obliged to pay the jizya tax. But it will certainly take place, considering the years of hatred and xenophobia and Armenophobia that generations of Azerbaijanis have been conditioned by. It can manifest itself in the form of impunity for crimes by Azerbaijani citizens against Armenians, as well as deliberate government neglect of key infrastructure projects in Armenian villages. There is considerable evidence of this from Azerbaijan’s behavior in Soviet times when the roads leading to Armenian villages in Nagorno Karabakh were in much worse shape than the general roads in Azerbaijan. This will affect also all other public services—Armenian villages will not have the same access to irrigation water, emergency, health and security services as Azerbaijani villages. It is a persistent way of making the population feel oppressed and second-class, with the intention of forcing them out.

—Attitudes in Azerbaijan about the Armenian population of Nagorno Karabakh are not encouraging either. Reportedly, a recent survey conducted by Focus Free Alliance of Euro-Asian Sociologists found that 67% of Azerbaijani citizens believe that Nagorno Karabakh Armenians will either be killed (43%) or displaced (24%), and 72% of Baku residents do not believe in peace with Armenians. The syndrome thus goes beyond the Genocidal intent of the government and is endemic in the broader Azerbaijani society.

—But probably the ultimate imponderable for the citizens of Nagorno Karabakh is moving from a democratic to an autocratic system of government. Nagorno Karabakh is a democratic country, and the people of Nagorno Karabakh have a deep-rooted tradition of living freely. Freedom and dignified living are not only a way of life, but an essential national value. Azerbaijan, on the other hand, is a dictatorship which has been ruled by the same family for three decades. Ilham Aliyev, who “inherited” the Presidency from his father, Heydar Aliyev, has been President for 20 years, and has appointed his wife, Mehriban Aliyeva, as Vice President. By contrast, in the past 29 years, Nagorno Karabakh has had 4 different democratically elected Presidents. The US State Department’s 2022 report on human rights practices in Azerbaijan talks of unlawful and politically-motivated killings, torture, cruel and inhuman punishment, arbitrary arrests or detention, and a myriad other human rights abuses. Equally damning reports on Azerbaijan’s human rights record, political and civil liberties, and chronic repression can be found from credible international organizations. No legal or territorial legacy from the Soviet Union can justify asking a people to leave their free, see INTEGRATION, page 20



COMMENTARY

MY TURN



by Harut Sassounian

Pashinyan's Gross Misconduct Dishonors Everything Armenians Hold Sacrosanct

Not a day passes without Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan making a new blunder.

This is what happens when a yellow journalist becomes the head of government. Most Armenians, blinded by their utter dislike of the former leaders, welcomed him initially with open arms.

Fortunately, Pashinyan's popularity has plummeted from 80 percent five years ago to 13 percent last month. Over the years, various Armenian polls have indicated a steady decline in his ratings. Nevertheless, he remains in power and refuses to resign, especially after his calamitous mismanagement of the 2020 war, resulting in the loss of most of the Republic of Artsakh and the deaths and injury of thousands of Armenian soldiers.

Pashinyan has made so many mistakes that it is hard to mention them all. His biggest blunder was recognizing the Republic of Artsakh as part of Azerbaijan, thus dishonoring the sacrifices of thousands of dead and wounded Armenian soldiers. He had no right 'to gift' Artsakh to Azerbaijan, since the territory of the Republic of Artsakh did not fall under the jurisdiction of Armenia.

Among Pashinyan's many other blunders are: swinging a hammer in the air during the electoral campaign in 2021, threatening to bash the heads of his political rivals and lay them on the asphalt. He then disparaged Armenians' long-held devotion to Mt. Ararat, and criticized two of Armenia's most cherished state symbols: the coat of arms and national anthem.

More recently, Pashinyan complained about the 1990 Declaration of Armenia's Independence, the initial document that paved the way for the establishment of the Republic of Armenia, after seven decades of Communist rule. He wrongly stated that the Declaration of Independence fomented conflicts with Azerbaijan and Turkey which is at odds with his "peace agenda."

The Declaration of Independence had referred to the 1989 unification act adopted by the legislatures of Soviet Armenia and the autonomous region of Nagorno-Karabagh. It had also declared that the Republic of Armenia supports the "international recognition of the 1915 Genocide in Ottoman Turkey and Western Armenia." Subsequently, Armenia's constitution referred to the Declaration of Independence.

Last week, on the occasion of the 33rd anniversary of the Declaration of Independence, Pashinyan stated: "A critical analysis of the text of the Decla-

ration shows that we eventually chose a narrative and content based on the formula that made us part of the Soviet Union; namely, a confrontational narrative with the regional environment that was to keep us in constant conflicts with our neighbors."

Pashinyan misinterpreted the Declaration of Independence from the Soviet Union as being "based on the formula that made us part of the Soviet Union." His faulty explanation is the exact opposite of what the text actually stated.

Pashinyan went on to push forward his unrealistic and defeatist 'peace agenda' to normalize Armenia's relations with Azerbaijan and Turkey. He does not seem to understand that begging for peace does not lead to peace. This is simply a formula for more humiliation and war. While blindly pushing for peace, he contradicted himself by stating that Azerbaijan is committing genocide against Artsakh Armenians. How can genocide and peace coexist?

Pashinyan's many criticisms indicate that he is opposed to all symbols and values of the independent Republic of Armenia. His eventual goal is to appease Azerbaijan and Turkey by eliminating all references to Artsakh and giving up the pursuit of genocide claims from Turkey.

In the meantime, Pashinyan has completely forgotten the dozens of Armenian prisoners of war who have been detained and tortured in Baku since the 2020 war. Not only he has taken no action to liberate them, but has not even mentioned them. This is the result of his failure to have Armenia and Azerbaijan simultaneously exchange all their prisoners of war, as stated in their 2020 agreement. Instead, right after the war, Pashinyan released all Azeri prisoners in return for a small number of Armenian prisoners.

Furthermore, after occupying most of Artsakh, Azerbaijan has taken over parts of the territory of the Republic of Armenia. Pashinyan has made no effort to dislodge the enemy. Protecting Armenia's borders is one of the key responsibilities of the Prime Minister.

Pashinyan's security agents silence all those who disagree with his defeatist "peace plan," whether they live in Armenia or the Diaspora. Patriotic Armenians and non-Armenians who support the Armenian Cause are banned from visiting Armenia, while the inhabitants of Armenia are harassed and arrested if they dare to protest or criticize Pashinyan. In the meantime, Turkish denialists and extremist grey wolf members are free to roam Armenia and insult the memory of Armenian Genocide victims at the Genocide Memorial in Yerevan.

This is the exact opposite of what a democratic country should be, where freedom of expression is the basic right of the people. Regrettably, a man who came to power claiming to establish democracy and democratic freedoms has done the exact opposite. All powers and decision-making authority is concentrated in the hands of one man who consults no one and listens to no one. Neither the Ministers nor the Parliament nor the President nor the courts have any say in Pashinyan's autocratic decisions.

The Expansion Of BRICS and Its Implications

By Benjamin Poghosyan

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

When economist Jim O'Neill, then working at Goldman Sachs Group Inc., coined the term BRIC in 2001 to draw attention to solid growth rates in Brazil, Russia, India and China, few may have anticipated that 22 years later, this term will be the buzz word shaping the global geopolitics.

In 2010, BRIC became BRICS as South Africa joined the club, but even then, many were skeptical that a grouping of diverse countries might play a meaningful role in global politics. However, as China transformed itself into a global economic heavyweight, the US declared China as its strategic competitor, and Russia — West relations hit the lowest point since the end of the Cold War due to the Russia — Ukraine war, scholars, experts, and politicians started to actively discuss the emergence of a new, multipolar world order, viewing BRICS as one of its primary pillars.

Nevertheless, doubts still lingered about the potential of BRICS to realize a coherent and consistent policy. Many pointed out the growing tensions between China and India and the burgeoning India — US strategic partnership as one of the obstacles to transforming BRICS into something more than a club of developing economies with different objectives. Conventional wisdom was saying that India, Brazil, and South Africa would not agree to transform BRICS into the competitor of the G7, especially amidst the growing tensions between the West, Russia, and China. Meanwhile, BRICS was becoming

increasingly popular among developing countries. On the eve of its 15th summit, the first hosted in person since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, 22 countries formally requested to join BRICS.

Probably, the primary driver behind this process was the growing resentment in the Global South against the policy of developed countries. The Indian Minister of External Affairs Subrahmanyam Jaishankar expressed this resentment in the best way during his speech at the 17th edition of the Bratislava Forum in June 2022, stating that Europe had to grow out of the mindset that Europe's problems were the world's problems, but the world's problems were not Europe's problems. Mr. Jaishankar mentioned Europe, but many in the Global South would use the term "Collective West" in the same sentence. It directly responded to the West's policy at the start of the Ukraine war, demanding that everyone follow sanctions against Russia, regardless of the implications for their economy.

Another driving force behind the growing attractiveness of BRICS was the US policy of using the US dollar, the global reserve currency, as a tool for economic coercion and punishment. The economic sanctions imposed on Russia, the freeze or confiscation of Russian assets abroad, and the intensive use of secondary sanctions were warning signs to many outside the collective West that too much reliance on USD makes them vulnerable to the political pressure of Washington. Not surprisingly, many developing countries started their first steps towards using national currencies in bilateral trade. Russia and China are the frontrunners in this field, but not only them. In mid-August 2023, India and the United Arab Emirates started settling bilateral trade in their local currencies, with India's top refiner making rupees payments for a million barrels of oil from the Middle Eastern nation. The transaction comes after one involving the sale of 25 kg of gold from a UAE gold exporter to a buyer in India at about 128.4 million rupees (\$1.54 million).

Before the start of the BRICS summit in South Africa, the main topic of interest was the possible participation of Russian President Vladimir Putin. It was triggered by an arrest warrant issued against him by the International Criminal Court (ICC) for alleged war crimes in Ukraine. As a signatory to the Rome statute, the treaty governing

The Hague court, South Africa was compelled to arrest individuals indicted by the ICC. President Putin only made a recorded video speech, while Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov represented Russia at the summit.

However, the key news of the summit was the decision to expand the membership of BRICS. Argentina, Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates have been invited to become members of BRICS, their membership taking effect on January 1, 2024. The South African President stated that BRICS valued the interest of other countries in building a partnership with BRICS, and had tasked foreign ministers to develop further the BRICS partner country model and a list of prospective partner countries and report by the next summit.

This expansion will bring more economic power to BRICS, as Saudi Arabia and UAE are among the most significant oil exporters. At the same time, Iran has one of the biggest natural gas reserves in the world. The membership of Iran is quite interesting, given the ongoing tensions between Iran and the US, as the sides failed to restore the 2015 nuclear deal. It will add anti-Western sentiments in BRICS, while the group may become a new platform for Saudi Arabia — Iran diplomatic engagement after China — mediated deal to restore relations.

The BRICS+, with its 11 members and the potential of further expansion, has a solid potential to become a new center of economic gravitation in parallel with the G7. The essential cementing glue between BRICS members will probably be economic relations rather than geopolitical rivalry with the West. Neither India, nor Brazil, Argentina, and the UAE, are interested in pushing the anti-Western agenda, but they are interested in diminishing their economic dependence on the US and the USD. Thus, chances are pretty high that the 15th Summit of BRICS will be remembered in history as the beginning of the emergence of the new, multipolar economic order, with less dependence on the collective West and USD as the global reserve currency.

(Benjamin Poghosyan is chairman of the Center for Political and Economic Strategic Studies in Yerevan, and Senior Research Fellow at the Applied Policy Research Institute (APRI) of Armenia.)



2024 Aurora Prize Humanitarians to Be Announced at Clinton Global Initiative Meeting in NYC

NEW YORK — The Aurora Humanitarian Initiative, an organization that addresses on-the-ground humanitarian challenges around the world, will announce the Humanitarians (finalists) shortlisted for the 2024 Aurora Prize for Awakening Humanity on September 18, 2023, at the Clinton Global Initiative (CGI) 2023 Meeting in

New York City. CGI brings together leaders from across the public, private, and philanthropic sectors to take action on the most pressing global challenges.

The Aurora Prize is a \$1 million humanitarian award that recognizes and supports the world's unsung heroes who risk their lives to help those impacted by humanitar-

ian crises and human rights violations. The Aurora Prize Laureate then continues the cycle of giving by sharing the award funds with those who help the most vulnerable. Aurora was founded in 2015, and over eight years has made a tremendous impact on the lives of those in the greatest need, with support for more than 400 projects in

56 countries, impacting more than 2.7 million people to date.

"The Aurora Prize is an innovative model for addressing humanitarian crises by supporting and elevating the work of unsung changemakers and catalyzing a global movement of giving," said Armine Afeyan, executive director of the Aurora Humanitarian Initiative. "The Clinton Global Initiative is an ideal collaborator for Aurora, with a likeminded focus on creating a community of doers, who are taking action to address the world's most pressing challenges."

"We have the privilege to host the Aurora Humanitarians at CGI 2023," said Greg Milne, CEO of the Clinton Global Initiative. "The Aurora Humanitarian Initiative has pioneered a model of giving and recognition to advance the work of leading humanitarians who are helping people on the ground every day. We are looking forward to meeting the Humanitarians next month and hearing their inspiring stories."

Launched by President Clinton in 2005, CGI has built a community of doers who are taking action to make a tangible difference in people's lives around the world. The CGI community includes organizations across government, business, and civil society; established and emerging leaders; activists and advocates; and community workers and doers on the front lines of our most pressing global challenges. CGI works with partners to develop Commitments to Action, which are new, specific, and measurable solutions. Since 2005, more than 3,900 Commitments to Action have been launched through CGI.

In a letter last month to the CGI community, President Clinton, Secretary Clinton, and Chelsea Clinton said this year's meeting would focus on how to "keep going" — in spite of the difficulties that arise — to build a stronger future for all.

Nominations for the 2024 Aurora Prize for Awakening Humanity closed on May 1, 2023. In total, more than 700 submissions were received for individuals hailing from 75 countries including the United States, Kenya, Armenia, Nigeria, Germany, Pakistan, Canada, India, UK, Czech Republic, and Georgia, among others.

The Aurora Prize Laureate will be awarded in 2024. The prize ceremony date and location will be announced in the fall.

Second Annual Anny Bakalian Lecture Series: Remnants: Embodied Archives of the Armenian Genocide

NEW YORK — The Middle East and Middle Eastern American Center (MEM-EAC) presents, on Tuesday, September 12 at 5 p.m. at The Skylight Room (9100) in The Graduate Center, City University of New York, 365 5th Avenue, its second Anny Bakalian Lecture with Professor Elyse Semerdjian discussing her forthcoming book *Remnants: Embodied Archives of the Armenian Genocide* with Distinguished Professor Beth Baron.

Foremost among the images of the Armenian Genocide is the specter of tattooed Islamized Armenian women. Blue tribal tattoos that covered face and body signified assimilation into Muslim Bedouin and Kurdish households. Among Armenians, the tattooed survivor was seen as a living ethnomartyr or, alternatively, a national stain, and the bodies of women and children figured centrally within the Armenian communal memory and humanitarian imaginary. In *Remnants*, these tattooed and scar-bearing bodies reveal a larger history, as the lived trauma of genocide is understood through bodies, skin, and—in what remains of those lives a century afterward—bones.

With this book, Semerdjian offers a feminist reading of the Armenian Genocide. She explores how the Ottoman Armenian communal body was dis-membered, disfigured, and later re-membered by the survivor community. Gathering individual memories and archival fragments, she writes a deeply personal history, and issues a call to break open the archival record in order to embrace affect and memory. Traces of women and children rescued during and after the war are reconstructed to center the quietest voices in the historical record. This daring work embraces physical and archival remnants, the



Prof. Elyse Semerdjian

imprinted negatives of once living bodies, as a space of radical possibility within Armenian prosthetic memory and a necessary way to recognize the absence that remains.

Semerdjian is Professor of Islamic World/Middle Eastern History at Whitman College and President of the Syrian Studies Association. She teaches a broad range of courses on the subject of gender, sexuality, social history, culture, and politics of the Middle East. A specialist in the history of the Ottoman Empire and Syria, she authored "Off the Straight Path": Illicit Sex, Law, and Community in Ottoman Aleppo (Syracuse University Press, 2008) as well as several articles on gender, law, violence, and Armenians in the Ottoman Empire.

Semerdjian has received two Fulbright scholarships to fund her research in Syria. She has written the social history of the Armenians of Aleppo, focusing on the formative sixteenth through eighteenth centuries. She currently serves on the editorial board of the *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies* and the *Journal for the Society of Armenian Studies* and recently finished her term as book review editor for the Interna-

tional *Journal of Middle East Studies*. In the Spring of 2013, she was the Dumanian Visiting Professor in Armenian Studies in The Department of Near Eastern Cultures and Languages at the University of Chicago. Her article "Naked Anxiety: Bathhouses, Nudity, and Muslim/non-Muslim Relations in Eighteenth-Century Aleppo" was published in the *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* and won the Syrian Studies Association Best Article Prize in 2014. She was awarded a Cornell University Society for the Humanities Fellowship on the subject of "Skin" in 2016-2017. Her recent article, "Bone Memory: The Necrogeography of the Armenian Genocide in Dayr al-Zur, Syria," *Human Remains and Violence* (2018) offers a preview of her forthcoming book, *Remnants: Encrypted Bodies, Gender, and the Memory of the Armenian Genocide*, under contract with Stanford University Press.

Baron is Distinguished Professor of History at The City College and Graduate Center of the City University of New York and Director of the Middle East and Middle Eastern American Center at the CUNY Graduate Center. A former editor of the *International Journal of Middle East Studies* and former president of the Middle East Studies Association of North America, her most recent book is *The Orphan Scandal: Christian Missionaries and the Rise of the Muslim Brotherhood* (Stanford University Press, 2014). Her current research focuses on the history of childbirth, the body, and colonialism in Egypt.

A live stream is available by Zoom. Please register at: https://gc-cuny.zoom.us/meeting/register/tJUvcu6prT4rGdePDxA6uWgXYwG2K9_WIgbW

The Impossibility of the Integration of Artsakh into Azerbaijan

INTEGRATION, from page 18

democratic society and get integrated into a brutal dictatorship, which has a proven record of inhuman treatment and repression of its own citizens, let alone an ethnic minority which through years of hate-propaganda, both the government and the society at large have come to hate.

There are many more examples of incalculable implications of the integration of Nagorno Karabakh in Azerbaijan, not to mention the repeated statements by Aliyev claiming that "present day" Armenia is historic Azerbaijani lands—but the latter is the subject of another article.

Suffice it say that it should be abundantly clear to all those accepting Azerbaijani sovereignty over Nagorno Karabakh, and to all those claiming that the Armenian minority can live safely under Azerbaijani rule, that the assured outcome of such an eventuality will be the full ethnic cleansing of Nagorno Karabakh from not only its Armenian population, but also from every trace of millennia-old Armenian heritage in the region.

All those who find the integration of Nagorno Karabakh into Azerbaijan acceptable, should have the intellectual honesty to come out and say that, in effect, they find another Genocide in a historic Armenian homeland acceptable. There is no reasonable way to separate the two.

Finally, it is important to note that the implications of allowing Azerbaijan to get away with its plans of ethnic cleansing in Nagorno Karabakh go way beyond Nagorno Karabakh. This sets a dangerous contemporary precedent of normalizing the use of force to resolve conflicts, in spite of diplomatic and legal efforts to limit the methods of the aggressor. Azerbaijan has disobeyed the ICJ rulings of February 22, 2023 and July 6, 2023 with impunity, and neglected specific demands by the US, the EU, Russia, the UN and many other countries to open the Lachin Corridor. What message are the international legal and diplomatic authorities sending to other autocratic aggressors in the world if Azerbaijan not only gets away with these blatant infringements, but also

succeeds to reach its ultimate objective of ethnic cleansing in Nagorno Karabakh?

Another important implication is condoning the abuse of the concept of territorial integrity. Under the guise of its sovereign rights within its territorial borders, Baku has tried to "justify" some of the most gruesome crimes against the population of Nagorno Karabakh—including mass starvation, deprivation of the most basic health services, electricity, water and internet. It has also methodically and repeatedly disrupted local agricultural production by shooting at farmers working in their fields. The weaponization of "territorial integrity" and its abuse as an umbrella rationalization for Genocide should never be condoned.

In conclusion, it would be a dangerous oversimplification to view the crisis in Nagorno Karabakh either as a matter of Azerbaijan's territorial integrity and sovereign rights, or as a merely humanitarian crisis to be addressed by opening the Lachin Corridor. By arguing for an integration of Nagorno Karabakh into Azerbaijan, the world

is in effect enabling Genocide and condoning the normalization of the use of force in settling conflicts. It is imperative that the international mediators engaged in resolving this conflict—Armenia, Russia, the United States, France, the EU, as well as the OSCE Minsk Group, and other stakeholders in the stability of the southern Caucasus such as India, China, Georgia and Iran—garner enough political will and moral courage to take a principled stand in support of the right for self-determination and independence of the population of Nagorno Karabakh.

(Vahan Zanoian is a global energy and security specialist. Over a span of 35 years, he has advised 15 different governments on economic development policy, energy sector strategy, national security, and global competitiveness. He has also served as a consultant to numerous international and national oil companies, banks, and other public and private organizations. Mr. Zanoian supports several initiatives of the Network State.)